

# PROPHETS OF THE PAST



INTERPRETERS OF JEWISH HISTORY

Michael Brenner

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Interpreters of Jewish History

*Translated by Steven Rendall*

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*In memory of my teacher*

YOSEF HAYIM YERUSHALMI, Z"L  
(1932–2009)

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A BOOK THAT SEEKS TO PLACE different historians in their context cannot be written without marking one's own position. The teachers and theories that one encounters during the course of an academic career are also crucial for one's own scholarly formation. In the first seminar I attended on Jewish history, taught by Michael Graetz in Heidelberg, I received an introduction to the classical texts of Jewish historiography, which made me curious to pursue the subject further. My subsequent studies in Jerusalem led me to Shmuel Ettinger, a scholar who died before his time and who now appears as a figure in this book. In New York, I was trained first and foremost by my dissertation director, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, whose fundamental book *Zakhor* remains indispensable for any serious investigation of Jewish historiography and whose studies were the decisive impetus for my own project. He did not live to see the English edition of this book, which profited immensely from his comments. This book is dedicated to his memory.

During the same semester in which I participated in Professor Yerushalmi's seminar on Jewish historiography I attended a class on the same topic, but with different emphases, across the street in the Jewish Theological Seminary, and taught by its chancellor, Ismar Schorsch. In these different contexts I encountered numerous opinions and points of view on Jewish history that quickly made one thing clear: it is not only *what* one learns that counts but also *from whom*, in what environment, and on what assumptions one learns it.

I was fortunate in being able to work with another renowned historian of the Jewish past, Michael A. Meyer, on the four-volume *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*. The goal was to produce a synthetic overview of a complex and controversial history. The ten contributors to this work had to deal not only with the sources of German-Jewish historiography but also with the many stereotypes and prejudices with which this history has become encased. In my own research on the culture of German Jews during the Weimar Republic, I tried to refute a few of these stereotypes, and I am well aware that in doing so I created a few new ones. During the

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I am grateful to have had the opportunity to experience this multitude of approaches to Jewish history, and I hope that part of this is reflected in the present book. It is the outcome of my realization that despite a growing interest in Jewish history, a comprehensive and comparative study of modern Jewish historiography did not yet exist. Stimulating conversations with colleagues and students at my own university, first at Brandeis and since 1997 in Munich, but also during my stays in Stanford, Bloomington, Berkeley, Budapest, and Haifa, provided the intellectual context while writing this book. I would like to offer my special thanks to Amir Eshel, Steven Weitzman, Alvin Rosenfeld, John Efron, Andras Kovacs, and Yfaat Weiss for their hospitality.

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Fig. I.1. Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920. Oil and watercolor, 31.8 × 24.2 cm. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Viewpoints on Jewish History*

History is one thing, but the idea of it  
is something else, and it is manifold.

—Johann Martin Chladenius,  
*Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1752

HISTORIANS CANNOT PREDICT the future, but they have the power to interpret the past. In their hands, the past is shaped in the same way that the future takes on form in the eyes of the classical prophets. Thus for the poet and scholar Friedrich Schlegel historians were “prophets facing backward.”<sup>1</sup> Schlegel’s remark of 1798 can be understood in two ways, as Walter Benjamin explained: “Traditionally it has meant that the historian, transplanting himself into a remote past, prophesies what was regarded as the future at that time but meanwhile has become the past.... But the saying can also be understood to mean something quite different: the historian turns his back on his own time, and his seer’s gaze is kindled by the peaks of earlier generations as they sink further into the past.”<sup>2</sup>

Benjamin interpreted Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* as “the angel of history,” the ideal image of a backward-facing prophet.<sup>3</sup> He acquired this picture in 1921 and bequeathed it to his friend Gershom Scholem (1897–1982). In the concluding lines of a poem written for Benjamin in 1933, Scholem noted in defiance of Benjamin’s interpretation:

I am an unsymbolic thing,  
mean what I am. In vain  
You turn the magic ring;  
I have no meaning.<sup>4</sup>

It may be characteristic that the twentieth century’s most important prophet of the Jewish past issued a warning against an excessively symbolic interpretation of history, which has been repeated ad nauseam by Benjamin devotees. Scholem was only too well aware how much the history of the Jews in particular had to be kept open to the most diverse interpretations. Although its interpreters’ ambition was to regard historical “reality” objectively, the constantly recurring relationship between their

ideological and political positions and their representation of history is clear.<sup>5</sup> This begins with the definition of their proper object of study: Is it the history of a nation, a religious community, or a collectivity defined in some entirely different way?

In the course of the past two centuries historians have constantly re-defined the history of the Jews. In the meantime, some of them have themselves become the subjects of scholarly studies.<sup>6</sup> But whereas a great deal has been written about Jews and Jewish history, and important studies of particular aspects of Jewish historiography in the modern period have appeared, astonishingly enough there is still no general, comparative overview and interpretation.<sup>7</sup> This is all the more surprising because in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jewish historiography was seen as having a considerable political function. Jews had relatively little substantial political or even military power to exert in support of their various claims to individual emancipation in Western Europe and the United States, collective autonomous rights in Eastern Europe, or the construction of a state in Palestine. On the other hand, what they *could* show was their consciousness of an especially long history. The early promoters of these three claims derived their legitimation from history. Whereas the advocates of individual emancipation emphasized the Jews' millennial rootedness on European soil, the supporters of autonomy emphasized the historically developed community as the basic form of Jewish existence. Finally, the Zionists proclaimed the historic right to the Land of Israel. In each case historians, as prophets of the past, played a key role in the process of political legitimation. For Jews, more than for most nations and religious communities, history was the primary weapon in this struggle.

Whereas outlines of the future played a crucial role in the narratives of Jewish historians, their non-Jewish colleagues commonly regarded the Jews as historical fossils. In the nineteenth century, these non-Jewish historians were dominated by Christian missionary thinking. Later on, Soviet historiography considered the Jews to be superfluous in class society, and special so-called research institutes devoted to the "Jewish question" served as tools of Nazi genocide. This extreme multiplicity of perspectives may be characteristic of Jewish history; the questions that confront its interpreters are, however, general in nature.

### Objectivity and Partiality

In the Japanese writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short story "In a Bamboo Grove," which became famous as the basis for Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*, various individuals testify regarding a murder they have wit-

nessed. Their different versions are obviously incompatible, and yet each witness is certain that he is telling the truth. Only when the testimony of the victim himself can finally be heard does it become clear that each observer was right from his own point of view, but completely misinterpreted the event as a whole.

In historiography, we are moving through a similar grove, but with the difference that—even if we could awaken the dead from the past—there is no neutral authority over and above the event that can tell us what actually happened. Like the witnesses in Akutagawa's short story, historians are also convinced that they are reproducing reality, even though they can report only their own version of the event.<sup>8</sup> If Gabriel García Márquez began his autobiographical novel with the sentence, "Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it," then the historian might analogously assert, "History is not what actually happened, but what we recount about it and how we recount it."<sup>9</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the historian Chladenius already doubted whether one could stand "above things," for there is "a reason why we perceive something one way and not another: and this reason is the viewpoint [*Sehe-Punkt*] that we take on it.... From the concept of the viewpoint it follows that persons who see something from different viewpoints will necessarily have different ideas of it."<sup>10</sup>

During the nineteenth century, different viewpoints all too often coincided with developing national, ideological, and religious perspectives of history. And after the end of the First World War historians of the nations involved in that conflict tried to prove, by appealing to historical sources, that other countries were to blame for its outbreak. In the new countries that emerged from the war, historians sought to complete the transition from "stateless nations" to "nationless states" by producing common myths for groups such as Czechoslovakians or Yugoslavians.<sup>11</sup> In a more general sense, for a Marxist historian, class conflict plays the chief role in shaping modern societies, whereas for a conservative historian that role is played by state-oriented politics.

Despite claims to scholarly objectivity, the writing of the history of religion is often influenced by the denomination to which the author belongs or by which he was shaped. Thus, one of the most famous twentieth-century British historians questioned whether a Christian could describe Jewish history objectively: "It is difficult for anyone brought up in the Christian tradition to shake himself free from the official Christian ideology," wrote Arnold Toynbee. "He may have discarded Christian doctrine

consciously on every point; yet on this particular point he may find that he is still being influenced, subconsciously, by the traditional Christian view in his outlook on Jewish history. Voltaire's outlook is a classic case. I am conscious that my own outlook has been affected in this way.... This contrast between the historical facts and the conventional Christian and ex-Christian view of the history of the Jews and Judaism shows how difficult it is for anyone brought up with a Christian background to look at Jewish history objectively."<sup>12</sup> A generation later, another British historian, Eric Hobsbawm, doubted that "being a Zionist is compatible with writing a genuinely serious history of the Jews."<sup>13</sup>

It is idle to speculate about whether an author who, like Toynbee, grew up in the Christian tradition, a "non-Jewish Jew" like Hobsbawm, or an author adhering to Zionism are qualified, on the basis of their viewpoints, to write Jewish history.<sup>14</sup> Or should chroniclers of histories laden with conflict ideally come from Mars, as the Israeli historian Benny Morris suggested? "The historian of the Israeli-Arab conflict must endeavour to write on this conflict as if he were writing on the war between Carthage and Rome, or as if he had just arrived from Mars and were observing the situation without any connections and commitments."<sup>15</sup>

Between making a naive claim to objectivity, according to which the historian's identity has to be "effaced," and challenging the very principle of reconstructing history, there lies a broad field of historical research. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, most historians strive, in full awareness of their own standpoint, to achieve as much distance as possible from ideological positions. Postmodern positions have succeeded in producing creative lines of investigation, but the literary analysis of texts cannot replace the search for historical facts. That there was a French Revolution, a First World War, and a Holocaust is as much beyond doubt as the facts that certain ideologies caused many people great suffering and that certain persons were responsible for historical events. However, historians will continue to debate the causes of the French Revolution, who bears the heaviest responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War, and whether the Nazi genocide was planned by Adolf Hitler from the outset or decided on only in the course of the war as a result of the inner dynamics of events.

### Remembering and Forgetting

In the course of history, "the Jews" have been used as a metaphor for the most diverse ideas. They have been revered as the founders of monotheism and persecuted as Christ killers. For some people they are the quin-

tessence of capitalism, while for other people (sometimes even the same ones) they are the inventors of communism. Their history has been read as an exciting success story and as a unique narrative of victimhood. Jews constituted no more than 1 percent of the European population, yet few persons in modern Europe attracted as much attention as Karl Marx and the Rothschilds, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka and Arnold Schoenberg.<sup>16</sup> And few topics occupied more space in the media of the second half of the twentieth century than the Holocaust and the State of Israel.

For the historian, the discrepancy between the small minority of Jews and the great attention they received is a problematic and often even annoying factor. Whatever one says about the Jews and their history has already been said at least once, and still worse, it has probably been refuted many times. Such a fund of scholarly knowledge, superficial popular belief, and deeply rooted prejudices makes it hard to arrive at clear statements. Nonetheless, in the past two centuries historians have repeatedly attempted to write the history of the Jews—and at the same time reinterpreted it.

The historian dealing with Jewish history is confronted by the difficult task of deciding how he (or she) will connect the chronological, geographic, and thematic levels in a way that will be the least confusing for the reader. In the history of the Jews, which extends over several millennia and continents, sacred and profane conceptions of time are intertwined with each other.<sup>17</sup> In the middle of the nineteenth century, for instance, the Jews of France, Russia, and Iran not only lived in different realms but also in different eras—eras of successful emancipation, gradual integration, and complete exclusion. This “simultaneity of the unsimultaneous,” to use Ernst Bloch’s expression, also held for Jews of earlier times, whether they lived in Jerusalem or in the area of Upper Egypt known as the Elephantine in the fifth century BCE, Worms or Cordoba in the twelfth century CE, or Amsterdam or Vilna in the seventeenth century. What bound them together, in addition to the basic forms of a common way of life, was the collective memory of a common origin.

It is the God active in history who demands in the Bible that certain events be remembered. The word *Zakhor* (“Remember!”), which Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi chose as the title for his pathbreaking study on Jewish historiography, frequently appears in the Bible as God’s command to the Jewish people: “Remember the days of old” (Deut. 32:7), “Remember what Amalek did to you” (Deut. 25:17), or most often, “Remember that you were a slave in Egypt!” These biblical commands to remember were

read and internalized by Jews at the time and in later centuries in the most diverse contexts. This culture of remembering certainly contributed to the Jews' being content to be seen not only as the People of the Book but also as the People of Memory—as, for instance, in the eyes of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin: “They have longer memories, they are aware of a longer continuity as a community than any other which has survived.”<sup>18</sup>

However, even in a people of memory there is a collective forgetting. The books following the Bible that were written after the closure of the canon remained outside the collective memory and thus became the Apocrypha. The writings of the most important Jewish historian of antiquity, Flavius Josephus, fell into oblivion among the Jews and were handed on by Christians. And who can know what else was forgotten over the intervening centuries? Yerushalmi observed that in the traditional Jewish understanding of history, only certain specific elements were remembered: “Only those moments out of the past are transmitted that are felt to be formative or exemplary for the halakhah [the complex of rites and beliefs that offer a sense of identity and purpose] of a people as it is lived in the present; the rest of ‘history’ falls, one might almost say literally, by the ‘wayside.’”<sup>19</sup>

### Nation and Religion

The reasons for the particularly rich multitude of ways of interpreting Jewish history are not only its long duration and spread over all the continents but rather the ever more urgent question raised since the end of the eighteenth century as to what the Jews really are: a people, a religious community, or a common culture. Scholars concerned with Jewish history gave and still give the most diverse answers. Whereas some write the history of a nation that even in dispersion always turns around Israel as its center, others see in it the history of a religious or cultural community that has overcome its connection with a specific territory. Still others go so far as to simply deny the existence of anything that can be designated as Jewish history enduring over the centuries.

Ideological and political motives often play a decisive role in the way that the Jews are defined. That is how we should understand the critical assertions of modern historians who attribute to Jewish historiography a particularly heavy ideological freight. Thus the American historian Lucy Dawidowicz writes, “Every people, every nation has used its history to justify itself in its own eyes and in the sight of the world. But surely no people has used its history for such a variety of national purposes as have the Jews.”<sup>20</sup> Todd Endelman expresses a similar view: “Since the Jews’

fate and future remained a matter of seemingly endless speculation, Jewish history writing remained harnessed to ideological ends. It served both external, apologetic, defensive ends as well as internal, intracommunal, political ones.”<sup>21</sup>

Are we dealing with the history of a people that for millennia defined itself on the basis of its descent, because according to religious law every child of a Jewish mother is Jewish? Or are we looking at the history of a religion, since outsiders can also become part of the collectivity by converting to Judaism? As a rule, conversion remains a marginal phenomenon, but it is certainly possible that in earlier centuries, whole peoples (or at least their upper classes) adopted Judaism, as did the Khazars, a tribe that lived in the north Caucasus.<sup>22</sup> In any case, what we now call ethnic and religious identification is closely bound up together. The Bible is, if you will, both the Jews’ history book and their most important religious source. When in Hebrew the expression *am yisrael* is used, there is always alongside the traditional interpretation—“the people of Israel”—also a religious one. It was only in the nineteenth century that the two levels began to separate. The modern nation-state required the integration of Jews as German or French citizens of Jewish faith. In order to make their new status clear, they henceforth preferred to call themselves Israelites or believers in the Mosaic religion.

In an increasingly secularizing period, however, this purely religious self-definition soon became meaningless for most Jews in the Western world. Like Freud, they called themselves “godless Jews”—and yet remained Jews. Some referred to a “community of fate” united above all by a historical experience.<sup>23</sup> Finally, there were the Zionists, who now based themselves entirely on the national components that had apparently disappeared in Western Europe. For them, religion in the modern age represented nothing more than a force dividing Judaism into orthodox, conservative, and liberal, whereas the national was the sole unifying element. When in his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State, 1896) Theodor Herzl declared, “We are a people,” this constituted an unprecedented provocation for German, Austrian, and French citizens of Jewish belief.<sup>24</sup>

It was Jean-Paul Sartre, a non-Jew, who spread the claim that Jews were made Jews by the antisemites: “It is neither their past, their religion, nor their soil that unites the sons of Israel. If they have a common bond, if all of them deserve the name of Jew, it is because they have in common the situation of a Jew, that is, they live in a community which takes them for Jews.... The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew.”<sup>25</sup> The



thesis attributed to Sartre was actually not so original; its core can be found three centuries earlier in the works of a Dutch Jew of Portuguese descent, Baruch Spinoza of Amsterdam: “At the present time, therefore, there is absolutely nothing which the Jews can arrogate to themselves beyond other people. As to their continuance so long after dispersion and the loss of empire, there is nothing marvelous in it, for they so separated themselves from every other nation as to draw down upon themselves universal hate, not only by their outward rites, rites conflicting with those of other nations, but also by the sign of circumcision which they most scrupulously observe. That they have been preserved in great measure by Gentile hatred, experience demonstrates.”<sup>26</sup>

Despite the overwhelming presence of images of the Jews, it is not surprising that most chroniclers of Jewish history were Jews, just as it was mostly Germans who were concerned with German history, and French who were concerned with French history. Questions of linguistic competence, an interest fed from childhood on, and social discourses no doubt played a role in this. Just as Thomas Macaulay in England, Jules Michelet in France, and Heinrich von Treitschke in Germany wrote passionate national histories, just as Catholic and Protestant historians of religion have often argued theologically as well as historically, so have Jewish historians frequently written on behalf of their nation or religious community.

Before the nineteenth century, non-Jewish authors occasionally dealt with postbiblical Jewish history. The first author of a comprehensive postbiblical Jewish history was in fact a Huguenot living in the Netherlands at the turn of the eighteenth century, Jacques Basnage (1653–1723). However, he and his multivolume history of the Jews were to remain an exception to the rule. A century later, in a letter written on February 21, 1792, Johann Kaspar Schiller advised his son Friedrich, then a professor of history in Jena, to do something to remedy the situation: “To my knowledge there is no complete, consistent history of the Jewish people since their dispersal in the world. I think it would be an important and therefore worthy object of the attention of a scholar who would, however, himself have to have a learned Jew at hand who could provide him with the necessary materials. In addition, a skillful development [of this subject] would be of great interest for Christianity.”<sup>27</sup>

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only a few non-Jewish historians took a serious interest in postbiblical Jewish history, and they did not always have a positive view of Jews. In their research, nineteenth-century Christian scholars sought to lay the foundations for a conversion of the Jews to Christianity, and when during the 1930s and

1940s German historians first tried to deal in a systematic way with Jewish topics, they did so under the aegis of an antisemitic policy in Nazi research institutes devoted to the Jewish question. Alongside these, there were still a few important studies on particular aspects of Jewish history written by non-Jewish authors. However, only in the second half of the twentieth century did a large number of non-Jewish historians begin to discuss Jewish history in a scholarly manner and completely without negative presuppositions.

### Scholarship and Ideology

The period covered in this book ranges from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first. There was, of course, earlier Jewish history writing, but it generally occurred in the context of theological observations. Only with the rise of modern scholarship, which made possible the critical examination of holy scriptures that had previously been revered as sacred, did a distanced attitude with regard to the sources become possible. The complex relationship between premodern Jewish historiography and collective memory has been investigated in detail by Yerushalmi. In the framework of the present book it can serve only as the background for the development of the last two centuries.

The first two chapters limit themselves essentially to a chronological account of Western and Central European historians of the “long” nineteenth century, whose turning point is represented by the appearance of its most significant representative, Heinrich Graetz (1817–91). The following chapters focus on the “short” twentieth century, from the First World War to the 1980s, and each of them deals with a specific geographic area. In the third chapter, I discuss Eastern European historians such as Simon Dubnow, historians in Poland during the interwar period, and the short-lived Soviet-Jewish efforts to write Jewish history. In the following chapter I examine the British and American schools gathered around Cecil Roth (1899–1970) and Salo Wittmayer Baron (1895–1989), and then the new tendencies in Germany, with the incipient research on the history of women. Chapter 5 concentrates on the representatives of a mainly Jerusalem-based Zionist historiography. The final chapter discusses the new challenges facing Jewish historiography in the postmodern era, and ends with the first complete survey of Jewish history and culture in the twenty-first century.

Each chapter is focused on a particular “master narrative,” which can be defined as “a coherent historical account that has a clear perspective and is generally about a nation-state. Its influence is not only exercised

to found a school within the discipline, but also becomes dominant in the public sphere.”<sup>28</sup> In the case of Jewish historiography, this definition should be modified insofar as only one of the master narratives, the Zionist one, is centered on the Jewish nation-state, while the other master narratives discussed here are directed toward emancipation and nationalism in the diaspora. Finally, we must consider whether postmodern “deconstructivism”—for instance, in the guise of feminism or postcolonialism—has not itself constructed new master narratives.

In view of what has already been said, it is hardly surprising that each generation of historians accuses its predecessors of not being objective, only to be accused of the same failing by a succeeding generation. The early representatives of German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the scholarly study of Jews and Judaism, were convinced that they had thrown off the fetters of a religiously determined account of the past, both those of a traditional rabbinical view and those of the Christian missionary view. However, their claim to have produced a scholarly, objective historical account was rejected by the following generation of historians, mostly Eastern European Jews led by Dubnow. They accused German Jewish historians of writing a purely intellectual history for use as a weapon in the battle for emancipation in Germany, and instead demanded a “sociological” perspective that would give more attention to the institution of the Jewish community. Soon, they themselves were accused of promoting such a point of view only because it served their own political interests, specifically in the battle for national autonomy for the Jews of Eastern Europe. This complaint was made by historians who protested, in the British and American contexts, against the “lachrymose” version of Jewish history that they saw in German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as well as in Eastern European Jewish historiography. For them, only in the free societies of the West was it possible to liberate oneself from this kind of Jewish “history of suffering.”

Nevertheless, these British and American historians also had to face the objection that they wanted to construct a happier Jewish past only because they were writing in a relatively comfortable diaspora. Thus, for example, the early Zionist historians argued that every attempt to write Jewish history in a non-Jewish environment was doomed to fail, since it had to be apologetically oriented from the outset, no matter whether it served the goals of individual emancipation in Germany, collective national autonomy in Eastern Europe, or the justification of an apparently successful assimilation in the United States. For these historians, Jewish history could be written only in a Jewish society, where one was not con-

stantly concerned about the judgment of the non-Jewish environment. Not surprisingly, this Zionist perspective became the target of vehement criticism, especially on the part of the so-called New Historians in Israel. The latter reproached their teachers, often from a post-Zionist position, of having argued just as apologetically as the generations that preceded them, since with regard to the continuing conflict in the Near East they sought to protect their own history. Only with a general relativization and a rejection of any claim to objectivity in the postmodern era did criticism of earlier generations of historians become less pointed. But even in the new claim to represent only one of many possible subjective positions we can hardly fail to discern the hope that by so doing, they might achieve, as it were, a higher level than earlier accounts, which often are described as “pseudoscientific.”

The protagonists to be discussed in a book on modern Jewish historiography doubtless include authors of large-scale works covering many periods, from Isaak Markus Jost and Graetz to Dubnow and Baron, as well as the founders and chief representatives of historical schools. Attention will be given not only to the historians mentioned above but also to those who have contributed to the theoretical questions and fundamental debates about Jewish historiography. In order to provide a sense of the whole spectrum of ways of representing Jewish history, short sections will be devoted to historians who may have had no enduring influence, but who in their own time represented prevalent ideologies.

Not all the figures explored in this book are historians in the sense that they studied or taught history. In the generation of the founders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, philology—as it was represented by Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), for instance—was the predominant area of study and research. But we should not forget that Graetz in the nineteenth century and Scholem in the twentieth had neither degrees in history nor professorships in the field of history, although they surely enriched our knowledge of Jewish history more than almost anyone else. Even today, some of the most significant studies on Jewish history are not produced by historians in the narrower sense of the term.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, very few of the studies on Jewish history, like other studies of history, were written by women. Women also became objects of extensive research only after the First World War, especially in Germany under the Weimar Republic. It was not until the late 1960s and the advent of feminist movements that a fundamental change in this situation occurred, and even then it only slowly affected scholarly institutions.

## Heroes and Eras

Most historical works teach us something about not only the events described but also their authors. If we repeatedly refer to the connection between their political convictions and their image of history, one should not too quickly conclude that writers on Jewish history were slaves to their ideology more than other historians. Like many of their colleagues who wrote other national and religious histories, most of them took up positions between a “polemical” and “value-free” view of scholarship. They shaped their own foundational myths and national character traits. Thus, British historians held fast to the concepts of “parliament” and “empire,” the French Revolution of 1789 represented the starting point for modern French historiography, Italian historiography turned around the *Risorgimento*, and in Germany the Wars of Liberation and Bismarck’s foundation of the empire “from above” defined historical discourse. The freedom-loving English, the revolutionary French, the Italians who carried on the values of ancient Rome and the Renaissance, and the culturally superior Germans were only a few of the favorite stereotypes of the respective national historiographies.<sup>29</sup>

In the representation of Jewish history these foundational myths and self-images are quite complex and reach far back. Some of the dividing lines in Jewish history are already present in the historians of antiquity. The questions of whether diaspora should be considered positive or negative and whether Jewish life would be best preserved in a country of its own, which were so often discussed in the nineteenth century, the debates about Jewish history as a history of persecution, and the evaluation of acculturation to the non-Jewish environment—all this is found in an early form and its contradictory interpretation two thousand years ago, in both books of the Maccabees, which offer an account of the battles for Jerusalem and the restoration of the desecrated Temple. The first book of the Maccabees, which was written in Hebrew in the Land of Israel, concentrates on the Hasmonean dynasty, and shows great interest in the geography of Palestine and the details of worship in the Temple. In contrast, the second book of Maccabees was composed in Greek probably during the Egyptian diaspora, and is concerned with the fate of the city and its legal system. Whereas the first book, which is written from a national perspective, regards all non-Jewish rulers as bad, starts out from the assumption that all peoples hate Jews, and also describes schisms within Jewry, the cosmopolitan author of the Greek account emphasizes

the charitable rulers and the good relationships with the non-Jewish environment, and for the most part regards the Jewish community as a harmonious whole.<sup>30</sup>

The dividing line between the national and cosmopolitan views is not alien to modern Jewish historiography. To remain with the representation of antiquity, this time from a modern perspective: the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE is generally considered as the turning point between the Jews' existence in a state bound to a territory and their dispersal as a religious community in the diaspora. For historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this can be interpreted in two ways: the more assimilated Jewish historians see in this event the birth of modern Judaism, which now could undertake its mission to spread pure monotheism among foreign peoples, and therefore despite all the tragedy it involved, they consider the end of national existence as exceptionally positive in the long run. Their Zionist-oriented colleagues saw this quite differently: for them, the destruction of Jerusalem ushered in the anomalous situation of a nation without an intact territorial center—a situation that from that point on had to be overcome.

As in any kind of history writing, in Jewish history periodization is an arbitrary act on the part of historians seeking to organize their material and make things easier for their readers. There are always several ways of defining turning points. When, for instance, did the modern period of Jewish history begin? Let us review some of the possibilities.<sup>31</sup>

In the beginning was Frederick the Great. His reforms ultimately led to the dissolution of community structures among the Jews and thereby paved the way for them to enter non-Jewish society. That was at least the way that Isaak Markus Jost (1793–1860) saw it; he was the first Jewish historian to write a multivolume, systematic history of the Jews down to modern times. For him, as a German Jew of the first half of the nineteenth century who still had to fight for complete emancipation, legal achievements were of special importance. His history of the Israelites is therefore also a document for German Jews' battle for equal rights.

In the beginning was Moses Mendelssohn. He embodied the “dawn” of a new Jewish age—at least according to Heinrich Graetz, the most important nineteenth-century Jewish historian. Like Jost a generation before him, for most of his life Graetz had to fight for emancipation. But as a self-confident Jew who emphasized the national dimension of Jewish history, he did not want to see in changes in the environment alone the true starting point for Jewish modernity. His concept of a “Jewish history of

suffering and learning” limited intra-Jewish history chiefly to intellectual history, for which Mendelssohn opened the gates into modernity.

In the beginning was the French Revolution. So we read in the *World History of the Jewish People* by Simon Dubnow, the great Jewish historian of Eastern Europe who, in contrast to his German Jewish predecessors, wished to write less an intellectual than a social history in which community structures and the anatomy of Jewish life in the diaspora were to be in the foreground. Political events that changed structures were thus for him more crucial than individual rulers or thinkers. It was not the appearance of the Jewish thinkers of the Enlightenment but rather that of the modern citizen that marked for Dubnow the beginning of a new epoch.<sup>32</sup>

In the beginning was Spinoza. For Salo Baron, the last author of a multivolume Jewish history and the first professor of Jewish history in a Western university, the intellectual and economic transformations of the Jewish community in the seventeenth century were decisive. Baron argued that the Jewish Enlightenment movement known as Haskalah, which is usually said to go back to Berlin in the mid-eighteenth century, actually began a century earlier in the “Dutch and Italian Haskalah.” In his view, the western European pattern served as a model for the history of the premodern diaspora, which he regards as generally successful for individual Jews.<sup>33</sup>

In the beginning was Shabtai Zvi. For Gershom Scholem, the founder of modern research on Jewish mysticism, Jewish modernity also began in the mid-seventeenth century, when the pseudomessiah Shabtai Zvi, who came from Turkey, divided the whole Jewish world into “believers” and “unbelievers”—those who followed him and those who rejected him as a heretic. Scholem tried to discern in this the causes of the later fragmentation of Jewish life that was to lead to assimilation, thereby lending intra-Jewish developments at least as much importance as the social circumstances. In addition, this evaluation gave Jewish mysticism a particularly high status, and in so doing clearly contradicted preceding models.

In the beginning was Yehuda he-Hassid. This otherwise largely unknown Jewish mystic, who left eastern Europe around 1700 for Palestine, embodied for Benzion Dinur (1884–1973), a professor of history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and later Israel’s education minister, the breakthrough into a new era. The fact that Yehuda he-Hassid, together with a small group of eastern European Jews, left the country where he was born and “returned” to the Holy Land marked for Dinur the beginning of the return movement, which ultimately culminated in the found-

ing of the State of Israel. This thesis represents the most radical Zionist attempt at the periodization of modern Jewish history.

Along with periodization we can also see the differing titles of works on Jewish history that cover more than one era as indexes of their respective orientations. It is no accident that Jost's work on the history of religion is called *The History of the Israelites*; that Graetz titles his already nationally oriented work *History of the Jews*; that Dubnow, as a convinced diasporic nationalist, chooses the title *World History of the Jewish People*, in which both the national character of the Jews and their dispersal over the whole world are contained; and that in his monumental work Dinur distinguishes between *Israel in Its Own Land* and *Israel in Dispersion*.<sup>34</sup> In all these cases the title is already a program.

Despite the differences, we should not forget the common elements. First, the historians mentioned here all start out from the assumption that something like a coherent Jewish history exists above and beyond countries, continents, and time boundaries. Moreover, they share the chronological approach of most of their fellow historians. No matter how differently they interpret Jewish history, they are similar in their selection of the events they describe and the way they organize them. Only after the Second World War did the Israeli historian Jacob Katz (1904–98), in his book *Tradition and Crisis*, radically break with event-oriented history and analyze chiefly the structures of Jewish life in Europe in the early modern period. And only at the end of the twentieth century did historians influenced by postmodernism put the existence of a coherent Jewish history radically in question.

The book seeks to present the varying ways of reading the history of a numerically small group defined as a nation, religion, or community of fate, whose members have played a significant role in world history. While it would be presumptuous to expect that it might provide an undisputed interpretation of Jewish history, this book should help us better understand the ways that its interpreters have seen it.





Fig. 1.1. Opening of the new synagogue in Frankfurt am Main, March 23, 1860. Jüdisches Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

## 1. JEWISH HISTORY AS HISTORY OF RELIGION

### *Wissenschaft des Judentums in the Service of Reform and Emancipation*

What do I know about history? Things that are called “history”—natural history, geological history, political history, intellectual history—have never wanted to enter my head; and I always yawn when I have to read something historical unless the writing style enlivens it for me.

—Moses Mendelssohn to Thomas Abbt, February 16, 1765

For no nation does history have more meaning than for the Jewish nation; its whole life and thought as a people were absorbed into the past; all its creations, political, scientific, and domestic, depended on the unbreakable chain of tradition. Thus history was its whole life, and to do justice to history was commanded by the Law, a source of longing and satisfaction. Every advance in consciousness was historical, every thought was protected and steered memory; every recognition became genuine only when connected with the truth of the forefathers.

—Selig Cassel, *Jüdische Geschichte*, 1850

THE OPENING OF THE MAIN SYNAGOGUE in Frankfurt’s Judengasse on March 23, 1860, involved more than an old religious community moving into a new building. In many respects, this ceremony signified a break with the past. The exterior of the building on the edge of the former ghetto, with its narrow streets and lanes, represented a new self-consciousness. Its imposing architecture emphasized the status of the Jews as citizens on the way to full emancipation, which was to be granted in Frankfurt only four years later. Whereas the pointed window arches and ornaments were influenced by Moorish architecture, the gabled roof recalled medieval townhouses and was supposed to stress the community’s integration into a Christian-dominated environment. The building’s interior also suggested to the community’s members that a breakthrough into a new age had occurred. Religious reforms were given visible expression; an organ was installed, and the principles of church architecture were largely fol-

lowed. The formal sermon given by Rabbi Leopold Stein on the occasion of the first Sabbath service in the new temple reinforced the impression communicated by the architecture. The rupture with the past came when he demanded that the “disgusting Judengasse” be demolished. Stein had already introduced confirmation in the synagogue in place of the traditional bar mitzvah, had the Torah read in a three-year cycle rather than annually, and read selections from the Prophets (*Haftarah*) in German rather than in Hebrew. During the cornerstone-laying ceremony in 1855, Stein had asserted that God had given the Jews Germany as a homeland and Frankfurt as their hometown.

The transformation into German citizens of Jewish belief is also evident in the illustration of the dedication of the synagogue. On the left side of the picture, the rabbis with their hats and robes are followed by the community’s notables in top hats, dressed just like the curious onlookers on the other side of the street who are viewing these events with interest. Between the Frankfurt and the Austrian eagles, framed by the arches of gothic towers, are portraits of emperors Joseph II and Leopold, whose Edicts of Tolerance led Jews in the Habsburg lands toward emancipation. Religious reform and emancipation were the two aspects of the battle that are given such clear expression in this picture.

During the nineteenth century, Jewish historiography in central and western Europe was a double-edged sword. Inwardly it served to establish religious reforms, and outwardly it engaged in the battle for emancipation. To situate the images of the past by *Wissenschaft des Judentums* we must, however, examine briefly how both Christian researchers and Jewish thinkers from eastern Europe, most of whom wrote in Hebrew, dealt with Jewish history.

### Christian Beginnings

Until the early nineteenth century, it was mostly Christian scholars who were involved in the study of Jewish history. The brief flicker of historiographical interest among Jews following their expulsion from Spain, which in the sixteenth century had produced a series of important interpreters of Jewish history, was soon extinguished.<sup>1</sup> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Hebraists like Johann Christoph Wagenseil and Johann Christoph Wolf had also turned to Jewish history, usually motivated by missionary zeal and not always without anti-Jewish feelings.<sup>2</sup>

The most significant chronicler of postbiblical Jewish history, Jacques Basnage, inevitably identified to some extent with the Jews who had been scattered all over the world, for as a Huguenot he himself had been

driven out of France and had to live in exile in Holland. As a pastor in Rotterdam, Basnage consolidated the French Reformed Church in the Netherlands. He regarded his fifteen-volume *History of the Jews, from Jesus Christ to the Present: To Serve as a Continuation of Josephus's History* (1716), as a continuation of the work of the ancient Jewish historian Josephus.<sup>3</sup> He recognized that his work was unparalleled, even among Jewish authors. Basnage remarked that Jewish readers were satisfied “with the Sincerity & the Moderation with which this History has been written,” and emphasized—as did the French Encyclopedists, to whose circle he belonged—his impartiality: “I thought that I ought to be neither partial nor extravagant. I allowed the Jews their Reasons and their Apologies. I reported Events in the circumstances which appeared true and certain to me. I censured Injustice, Violence & Persecution. I followed the most exact Historians without heat of Faction, without having regard to the Preference of Persons.” Thus, he angered some Catholic readers with his open critique of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, or his rejection of the pope’s anti-Jewish policy. On the other hand, he proposed his Dutch exile as an example of religious tolerance for the Jews who had fled the Iberian Peninsula. Nonetheless, throughout Basnage’s whole work is found the unconcealed missionary conviction that the Jews must ultimately end up in the lap of the church. “If I offended some article of Religion, all Roman Catholics are interested in defending it with me, since I only worked to prove the Truth of Christianity against the Jews.”<sup>4</sup>

Among Jewish readers, Basnage is known chiefly through the Yiddish work of Menachem Man ben Salomo Halevi Amelander (d. 1767). His *She'erit Yisrael* (*The Remainder of Israel*, 1743) was popular and was reprinted a few times, even as late as the nineteenth century. It was the first attempt made by a Jewish historian to describe the postbiblical history of the Jews, though it was not very original. Large portions of his account are based on Basnage’s history, but at the end of his book he also provides a history of the Jews in the Dutch Republic from the beginning of the seventeenth century to 1740. Long before German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* began, other Dutch Jewish historians followed in Amelander’s traces.<sup>5</sup>

The scholarly standards of the nineteenth century should be applied neither to Basnage’s enterprise nor to those of his followers in the age of Enlightenment. But the histories written by Basnage and other Christian Hebraists exercised a significant influence on later Jewish historians, and especially on those aligned with Zionism. Here we see for the first time

a break with traditional messianic Jewish views that understood Jewish history as above all one of exile. The expectation of salvation, connected in traditional Judaism with a messianic future, found its place in Basnage in a Christian messianic interpretation oriented toward the present. Jewish historians of the following centuries accepted this fundamental idea, and saw messianic hopes as already or almost fulfilled in their own time by emancipation or a return to their own land.<sup>6</sup>

As a rule, Christian historians shared Basnage's theological biases against Judaism. Thus, the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews did not hesitate in 1818 to publish the general account of postbiblical Jewish history written by the American Hannah Adams (1755–1831), which is based largely on an English translation of Basnage's work that had appeared a century earlier.<sup>7</sup> Adams described in detail the persecution of the Jews, but repeatedly noted that only baptism would put an end to the Jews' suffering, which they themselves had caused. "In the meantime, while with the most painful sensations, we read an account of the calamities, which no other description of men ever experienced in any age or country, let us recollect, that the Jews had called down the divine wrath, by crucifying the Lord of glory, and blasphemously exclaiming: 'His blood be upon us and our children.'"<sup>8</sup>

How little literature on Jewish history was available in German at this time is shown by the fact that this certainly mediocre work by an author who had also written various religious histories (for example, the *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations*, 1784) as well as a history of New England was the only one of her numerous writings to appear in German translation (1819).<sup>9</sup>

In his preface, the German translator emphasized the practical utility of Adams's account. On the one hand, the long history of discrimination and persecution is for him a reason for emancipating the Jews: "Therefore it is a crying injustice not to accord Jews all rights accorded other subjects." But on the other hand, he answers in the affirmative the question he himself asks: "Aren't the Jews themselves to blame for the fact that they are not accorded all civil rights?" The Jews distinguish themselves from the Christians in their religion and the exercise of their vocations. The translator therefore concludes from the history of doctrine that in order to become citizens, Jews must "make a great change in their customs, institutions, and way of thinking." "They must also move their Sabbath ceremony to Sunday; they must learn trades, and practice agriculture.... As soon as a complete transformation of their religious and moral thinking has been made and they completely change their way

of life, then no state will hesitate to accord them all the rights that every other person in the state enjoys.”<sup>10</sup>

This line of argument can be traced in the German discourse on emancipation from its first representatives to the more critical writers of Idealism. In the first fundamental work on the civil improvement of the Jews, in 1781, Christian Wilhelm Dohm expressed his conviction that post-biblical Judaism was a corrupted religion and that it was the Jew’s task “to return to the rational religion already included in his forefathers’ belief.”<sup>11</sup> For the reactionary age that followed the Congress of Vienna—the period during which Adams’s book was introduced to the German reading public—Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s harsher-sounding statement was more characteristic: what should be done is to cut off the heads of Jews some night and put on new ones “in which there is not a single Jewish idea.”<sup>12</sup>

### Traditional Reverberations

The beginnings of Jewish authors’ modern discussion of their history must be sought in the Jewish Enlightenment. The Haskalah created the preconditions for a critical consideration of their own past. However, the assessment of Mendelssohn and his immediate followers was inadequate, insofar as it was they who gave historical study an equal place alongside philosophy and philology. This did not always have to be as explicitly expressed as it was in the letter from Mendelssohn to his friend Thomas Abbt cited above.

Today we know—especially through Shmuel Feiner’s pathbreaking research on the Haskalah’s conception of history—that in the generation of Mendelssohn’s disciples in central and eastern Europe, a significantly altered attitude with regard to the study of history started to develop.<sup>13</sup> In his plan for reforming Jewish educational institutions, *Divrey shalom ve-emet* (*Words of Peace and Truth*, 1782), Mendelssohn’s fellow traveler Naphtali Herz Wessely stressed the value of studying history.<sup>14</sup> Here history is for the first time viewed as an indispensable discipline in the new curriculum for Jewish students. It already implies the pedagogical task of instruction in history: the example of heroes and villains is to provide a guide for the pupils’ own behavior. The study of history is not in any way an end in itself but rather a discipline ancillary to the ethics and philosophy of the present. Other *maskilim* (proponents of the Enlightenment) undertook the study of different aspects of Jewish and also world history, seeking to prove the spirit of reason through the course of history, or as Salomon Löwisohn put it in 1820 in his lectures on the modern history

of the Jews, “to use reasoning to bring light and life to the dark, lifeless masses.”<sup>15</sup> However, for the most part they did not use original sources but instead summarized the findings of German-speaking historians who were often second-rate.<sup>16</sup>

The school of Jewish scholars from various parts of Europe that is known as *Hokhmat Israel* (the Hebrew counterpart to German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums*) continued, so far as its conception of history was concerned, in the tradition of the Jewish Enlightenment movement.<sup>17</sup> This kind of historiography culminated in the philosophy of history expressed in the *More Nevukhey Ha-zeman* (*A Guide for the Perplexed of the Time*), a work by the Galician Enlightenment thinker Nachman Krochmal (1785–1840), published posthumously. Its title echoes that of the medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides’ masterpiece, *A Guide for the Perplexed*. According to Krochmal, Jewish history follows a course different from that of the histories of all other nations. Whereas the latter, after a period of emergence and flourishing, are ultimately doomed to fail and pass away, the cycle of Jewish history is constantly begun anew. Here, the image of the “Eternal Jew” is collectivized, and transferred to the history of the Jews, which in contrast to that of other peoples is not ephemeral.<sup>18</sup>

In this work—which makes use of countless allusions to biblical, rabbinical, and mystical literature from both the Jewish tradition and the world literature of its time—Krochmal sought to make history an integral element of a Judaism that affirmed tradition and was true to the law. He did not succeed in doing so, though; the emerging Orthodoxy in Judaism resisted a historical interpretation of Jewish religion and culture.<sup>19</sup> So far as Krochmal’s influence on later *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is concerned, Scholem certainly exaggerated when he claimed that “in fact, he did not affect the method of research during the generation which followed him, and one seeks in vain his impact upon those engaged in scientific work.... Had his *Guide for the Perplexed of Our Times* never been published, nothing in the course of the development of the Science of Judaism over the course of the nineteenth century would have been different.”<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, the most important representative of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Zunz, had published the *Guide*, the most important Jewish historian of the nineteenth century, Graetz, had read and used it, and a generation later it still influenced the young Dubnow’s conception of history.

And yet, an unbridgeable gap separates scholars like Krochmal, who wrote in Hebrew and were chiefly interested in internal-Jewish develop-

ments from contemporary representatives of modern *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.<sup>21</sup> The former included the rabbi and literary researcher Samuel David Luzzatto (abbreviated as ShaDal, 1800–1865), who worked in Italy, and the chief rabbi of Prague, Solomon Judah Löw Rapoport (abbreviated as ShiR, 1790–1867), who was known as the author of biographies of scholars and studies on the Talmud and rabbinical literature. These scholars were well aware of this gap. They were active as rabbis, and remained closely connected with the religious values of Judaism, wrote their works in Hebrew, and were hardly noticed outside the Jewish community. They saw in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and its conception of history an attempt to win the approval of the non-Jewish world. In a letter to Luzzatto, Rapoport smiles especially at their efforts to be objective, which in his opinion result in the opposite: “By making so great an effort to appear disinterested, they end up by taking an interest.”<sup>22</sup> And for his part, Luzzatto carries the objection to making use of historical research for the purposes of emancipation still further: “For them, Goethe and Schiller are greater and more venerable than all the prophets, Tannaim and Amoraim [scholars from the time of the Mishna and Gemara, the two parts of the Talmud].... Yet another motive possesses them, as well: to grant Israel glory and honor in the eyes of the nations. They celebrate the virtue of some of our ancestors in order to hasten the chief redemption, which, to their minds, is Emancipation. However, this scholarly enterprise has no future and will be void immediately upon the arrival of this ‘redemption,’ or when all those who studied Torah in their youth, and who believed in God and Moses before going off to study with Eichhorn and his disciples, die.”<sup>23</sup>

Precisely what German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums* saw as one of its major contributions—namely, to do research on Jewish history in accord with exactly the same criteria used in research on other histories—was a source of annoyance for the most important representatives of their Hebrew-language counterparts, *Hokhmat Yisrael*. Hence in his letter to Rapoport, Luzzatto went on: “The Jewish research that some of the German scholars of our generation practice has no right to exist, for they themselves do not approach it as a subject of intrinsic value.... They study the early history of the Jews as others study the history of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon or Persia—that is, for the love of knowledge, or the love of prestige.... But *Hokhmat Israel* ... is learning based on belief, engaging in study, and research in order to understand the Torah and the Prophets and the word of God, to understand ... how in every generation, the divine prevailed over the human.”<sup>24</sup>



German representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* would probably have considered this criticism a compliment. Their definition of knowledge in fact excluded Rapoport's and Luzzatto's commitment to "learning based on belief." They also detested a clear statement of goals such as that given by Mordechai Strelisker, a *maskil* (a proponent of the Jewish enlightenment) who belonged to Krochmal's circle, in 1830. As for the primary tasks of historiography, he mentioned reminding readers of the great figures in Jewish history, examining the heroic figures in accord with moral criteria before the tribunal of history, edifying the readers by means of positive examples taken from history, and using negative examples to make them avoid injustice and immorality in the future.<sup>25</sup>

A feature common to most products of *maskilic* historiography was that despite their occasionally harsh criticism of some religious developments—especially Hasidism—they had not detached themselves from fundamental ideas that were theological in nature. When their scholarly discoveries came into conflict with traditional principles of belief, there was no question which side they would take. Rapoport expressed this as follows: "If it sometimes happens that my mind is carried away with ideas which are in opposition to those held by the sages of the Mishna and the Talmud, I clip its wings and bring it back to earth."<sup>26</sup> Despite their enormous erudition, their writings can hardly be described as modern historiography in the sense of the scholarly study of sources. As Shmuel Feiner showed, the Jewish thinkers of the Enlightenment who wrote in Hebrew in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and "whose studies ... were used for internal didactic purposes and remained faithful to the traditional sources," wanted to create an alternative to German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* developed, more influenced by the German university than by the Jewish tradition, more by Johann Gottfried von Herder and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel than by Rashi and Maimonides. It began in early nineteenth-century Berlin, and its representatives had to tackle an almost impossible task: on the one hand, to lay bare, on the basis of the new principles of historical study and as impartially as they could, the buried sources of the Jewish past; and on the other hand, to use these same sources to produce religious reform and political emancipation.

### In the Service of Religious Reform

This new kind of critical and reform-minded understanding of history did not grow up overnight. The transitional generation of German-speaking Jewish historians is represented by an almost-forgotten Bohe-

mian Enlightenment thinker whose many writings attracted public attention in his day. Peter Beer (1758–1838), an educator who grew up in Bohemia, was, as the historian Michael Meyer put it, the author of “the first comprehensive historical study of the Jewish religion written by a modern Jew.”<sup>28</sup> In his chief work, *Geschichte, Lehren und Meinungen aller bestandenen und noch bestehenden religiösen Sekten der Juden und der Geheimlehre der Kabbalah* (*History, Doctrines, and Opinions of All Former and Still-Existing Religious Sects of the Jews and the Secret Doctrine of the Kabbalah*), which appeared in 1822–23 in two volumes, but large parts of which had already been published in the periodical *Sulamith* in 1806, Beer represented Jewish history as the history of sects. His theory of the existence of an original Jewish religion (*Urreligion*) allowed him to use scholarly means to promote his own ideas about religious reform. He was thus the earliest Jewish historian to attempt what more competent and important writers such as Jost, Zunz, or Abraham Geiger (1810–74) later sought to do, and that Ismar Schorsch once called “putting scholarship in the service of reform.”<sup>29</sup>

The incipient process of emancipation had turned Judaism from an all-encompassing way of life into a religion. Jews would be rewarded by being made equal to Christian citizens when they had abandoned all the identifying characteristics that went beyond mere adherence to their religion. But once Judaism was redefined as a denomination, its history then had to be rewritten as the history of a religion, analogous to the history of Christianity. Consequently, Jewish historians now introduced many concepts taken from the Christian realm and applied them to the Jewish religion. They referred to Judaism as “the synagogue” or simply “the Jewish church.” In his introduction, Beer himself used the concept of “Jewish church history.”<sup>30</sup> Other concepts that he borrowed from church history were “schism” (that was how he described, for instance, differences of opinion about questions of religious practice between Hillel and Shammai, important scholars who lived in the first century CE) and “reformation.”

Because in his time both Christians and “Mohammedans” were named after the founders of their religions, Beer rejected the terms Jews and Israelites, and tried to substitute for them the analogously formed word “Mosaites” (*Mosaiten*). Finally, he took the decisive step in writing his history: since the history of Christianity can be seen as a history of the various denominational groups, which were then often also called “sects,” the same must hold for the Jewish religion. According to Beer, the history of Judaism was thus a history of its various religious sects. This conception

was adopted in the following generation by Jost, as the title of his three-volume *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten*, 1857–59 (History of Judaism and Its Sects) shows.

It was only to be expected that scholars who wanted to justify historical alternatives to traditional rabbinical Judaism would be attracted to the Karaite sect, which arose in the eighth century and rejected the Talmudic tradition. In this connection they also drew on Christian Hebraists such as Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609), who first praised the Karaites as an alternative preferable to rabbinical Judaism.<sup>31</sup> It is thus significant that Scaliger was a Huguenot who, like Pierre Bayle and Basnage later on, took refuge in the Netherlands. Another author of a study on the Karaites, Jacobus Trigland, was a Protestant who had converted from Catholicism. For all of them, the importance of the religious schisms within the Christian world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was particularly clear, and they were also wont to find part of their own destiny in the history of Judaism, or to read it into that history.

Basnage, for example, emphasized the sectarian character of Judaism by pointing out that one of the Jewish sects, the Pharisees, dominated present-day Jewish life. This notion suggests that alongside this sect, there are others that have a claim to represent “true Judaism.” Here too, Beer is in agreement with his Christian predecessors. However, so far as their real intentions are concerned, we must make distinctions. Basnage and his Christian predecessors did not think that Jews should return to a pure ur-religion but rather that they should be brought into the bosom of the church, which in their view had replaced all Jewish sects. This missionary intention characteristic of many Christian historians of Judaism was still to be found in Beer’s time, as can be seen in the review of Beer’s work published in the *London Quarterly Review* in 1828. According to the author of this review, it is only when the ideal solution, baptism, is not possible that the question of a return to the Jewish ur-religion of the Bible arises, for then might “the rabbi-trained Jew turn from his old guides to embrace a pure Judaism. That the Caraites practise a religion nearly such ... we are willing to admit.”<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, baptism was not Beer’s goal. Instead, he considered it his vocation to refute the idea, commonly found among Jews and non-Jews, of a monolithic and static Judaism. As early as 1806 he had already described the main goal of his program in the periodical *Sulamith* and repeated it verbatim in the introduction to his history published in 1822: “The goal of the present essay is simply to relieve *Sulamith*’s many Chris-

tian or Jewish readers of the deleterious madness that consists in assuming that the Jewish nation as a whole, in religion and in the morality that flows from it, has always been at the standpoint where it is now, and that therefore all internal and external striving to achieve its due perfection is only idle effort.”<sup>33</sup>

Beer repeatedly states quite clearly his own ideas with regard to various trends within Judaism. He leaves no doubt as to whom he admires and whom he despises.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the Karaites came closest to the original form of Jewish religion, their opponents—whom Beer calls Rabbanites—distorted the basic doctrines of Judaism into a mystical superstition. He rejected the title of rabbi as a matter of principle, and explained why in a petition to the emperor: “The title of rabbi could be replaced by that of preacher or pastor, so that decent [*anstaendige*] people can exercise this office.”<sup>35</sup> Beer’s textbook, *Dath Israel (Israel’s Faith)*, is marked by its aversion to the “Polish rabbis.”<sup>36</sup> Despite these fierce polemics and his peculiar interpretation of Jewish history, Beer was convinced that he had described the events objectively: “I did what every writer of history has a duty to do; namely, represent events as they really happened.”<sup>37</sup>

Beer still belonged to a generation that had had no opportunity to receive academic training in a German university and remained unaffected by the critical scholarly methods of modern historical research. His most important successor, Graetz, judged harshly the “uneducated, foolish Peter Beer” for using “confused erudition combined with hollow thinking and tastelessness to flatten out Judaism.”<sup>38</sup> After Beer, more successful reformers and more critical researchers were to put history in the service of reforming the Jewish religion.

### In the Battle for Political Emancipation

The birthplace of modern Jewish historiography was not in Prague but in Berlin. When a few Jewish students at the University of Berlin began in 1819 to meet for regular lectures and discussions, they announced a new relationship to their own Jewish heritage. Up to that point, Jews had studied their texts not as historical documents but rather as sacred sources that governed their daily lives and their relationship to God. On the other hand, it was with the founding of the Association for the Culture and Scholarship of the Jews (*Verein für die Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*) in 1819 that history itself became a kind of sacred source, as Yosef Yerushalmi has written: “The modern effort to reconstruct the Jewish past begins at a time that witnesses a sharp break in the continuity

of Jewish living and hence also an ever-growing decay of Jewish group-memory. In this sense, if for no other, history becomes what it had never been before—the faith of fallen Jews.”<sup>39</sup>

It was only in the early nineteenth century, when historical studies began to be accorded steadily increasing importance in German universities, that Jewish scholars also approached their own past with scholarly critical distance. Systematic recommendations regarding the study of the Jewish past emerged from within the association. In 1818, its most important member, Leopold Zunz, had written an essay with the somewhat misleading title “Remarks on Rabbinical Literature” (*Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur*), in which he outlined a first systematic agenda that included the most diverse areas of Jewish life, ranging from language to art and music, and also jurisprudence, astronomy, and mathematics. The heritage of Herder and above all the influence of Zunz’s own teachers, August Wilhelm Boeckh and Friedrich August Wolf, may explain why this essay founding a new discipline was titled philologically, as “Rabbinical Literature,” rather than historically, as “Jewish history.” In Zunz the new precedence granted to the historical is already discernible, but it is still hidden under the cover of philology. “Modern Jewish historiography was thus born not as *Geschichte* but as *Wissenschaft*; under the aegis of philology, not history,” Leon Wieseltier has written, at the same time pointing to Zunz’s real contribution. He not only extended the field of the Jewish historian to the whole of Jewish life but he also dissolved the traditional distinction between sacred and profane texts. “Zunz, in short, seeks provocatively to collapse the distinction between sacred and profane writing, and in its place substitute an integrated, secular, national literature.”<sup>40</sup> It is precisely on this point that Zunz and his Berlin colleagues part company from their contemporaries Rapoport and Luzzatto.

Zunz stressed the urgency of the enterprise and explained that now was the time to dig up the treasures of the past—otherwise it might already be too late.<sup>41</sup> In a hundred years, he prophesied, it would probably be difficult to obtain Hebrew books and decipher them. Zunz was indeed surprised to witness, toward the end of his long life, a revival of Hebrew literature. According to one anecdote, at the close of the nineteenth century, the Russian Jewish author Judah Leib Gordon visited the aged Zunz, introducing himself as a “Hebrew writer,” whereupon Zunz is supposed to have replied, “Really? And when did you live?”<sup>42</sup>

Later on, Scholem criticized such remarks, with his tendency to polemics, as “a whiff of the funereal,” especially with reference to Moritz

Steinschneider (1816–1907), an important scholar in Jewish studies and a major bibliographer to whom the following remark is ascribed: “We have only one task left: to give the remains of Judaism a decent burial”<sup>43</sup> If this is already an insufficient characterization of Steinschneider, such an anecdote is certainly unfair to Zunz, who feared the death of the Hebrew language more than he hoped for it.

No doubt there was extremely lively interest in Judaism among members of the Association for the Culture and Scholarship of the Jews, whose foundation was described three years afterward by its leading thinker, Eduard Gans (1796–1839), in relation to the spreading anti-Jewish riots of 1819: “It was toward the end of 1819 that we met for the first time. In many cities of the German fatherland dreadful scenes occurred that made some people suspect an unanticipated return to the Middle Ages. We came together to help discuss, when necessary, how best to escape the deeply rooted damage.”<sup>44</sup>

Wissenschaft des Judentums could not be separated from the battle against exclusion and for the emancipation of the Jews. It had from the outset committed itself to this battle, as Gans explained with reference to Herder: “A time will come when people in Europe will no longer ask who is a Jew and who is a Christian. To bring about this time sooner than it might otherwise come, to bring it about using all the strength and effort at your disposal: that is the goal, gentlemen, you have set yourselves by assembling here.... You want to help tear down the partition that separates Jews from Christians, and the Jewish world from the European world.”<sup>45</sup>

Gans himself later realized, however, that these majestic goals were still far removed from reality in Christian Prussia. To become a professor of law, he had to allow himself to be baptized, and thus—like another more prominent member of his association, Heinrich Heine—abjure the basic goal that had once united the members of the association: to give Judaism equal rights alongside Christianity.

Another member of the association, Immanuel Wolf (or Wohlwill, 1799–1847), had formulated in a concrete way the ambition of Wissenschaft des Judentums, which provided the basis for the Jewish battle for emancipation: “Scholarly knowledge of Judaism must decide regarding the Jews’ worthiness or unworthiness, their ability or inability, to have the same respect and rights as other citizens.”<sup>46</sup> He thereby set a goal for research that was to be criticized by later writers as an apologetic element in Wissenschaft des Judentums. In fact, it can hardly be denied that especially during its early decades, Wissenschaft des Judentums was also

engaged in a political battle, though that was not its exclusive preoccupation: using scholarly means, it sought to prove that Judaism and Jews had a claim to equal rights. It did this even though in the same essay Wolf had insisted that “Wissenschaft des Judentums ... deals with its object in and for itself, for its own sake, not to some special end, or out of a specific intention.”<sup>47</sup> Scholarship for scholarship’s sake was a thought that would recur among later representatives of the discipline, but that because of the specific historical conditions of the Jewish minority, was certainly still harder to realize in the nineteenth century than the similar claims to objectivity made by non-Jewish historians. Here we may recall the principles put forward by Ranke shortly afterward: “The critical study of authentic sources; impartial conception; objective representation—the goal is the presentation of the complete truth.”<sup>48</sup>

This contradiction, between undertaking scholarship for scholarship’s sake and putting scholarship in the service of a higher ideological or political end, was to characterize studies of the Jewish past in the nineteenth century. Alongside Jewish historiography in the service of religious reform, as we have already seen it in Beer’s work, stands the battle for emancipation, with historiography as its chief weapon.

The father of the discipline, Zunz himself, fought, like most of his companions in arms, on both the internal and external fronts. His internal battle was directed against the monopoly on Jewish erudition exercised by an interpretation defended by tradition. Thus in the first and second volumes of the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, he published a biography of the greatest medieval Talmudic scholar under the title “Salomon ben Isaac, called Rashi.” In it he was concerned less with Rashi’s principles of Bible and Talmud interpretation than with situating them in their immediate environment and time. Rashi was to be transformed from a timeless figure into a historically localizable one.<sup>49</sup>

With his scholarly writings, however, Zunz emerged above all as the pioneer of political emancipation. Like Wolf, he was convinced that “equal rights for Jews in matters of customs and life will proceed from equal rights for Wissenschaft des Judentums.”<sup>50</sup> In his five-hundred-page work, *The Sermons of the Jews, Historically Developed* (*Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt*, 1832), he documents the long tradition of Jewish sermon literature in the local language, thereby refuting the Prussian government’s rejection of German sermons in the synagogue as an innovation in the Jewish liturgy. The political motivation of this important work of scholarship is clearly expressed in Zunz’s introduction: “I appeal to authorities who recognize the prejudice and abuse,

the expression of the truth, of justice; for where freedom, science, and civilization are fighting all around us for new foundations, the Jew is also allowed to lay claim to serious participation, to unrestricted rights. Or, because clericalism and inquisition, despotism and slavery, torture and censorship are gradually receding, must the arbitrariness of the rule of force and of the madness of the Middle Ages retain a dwelling-place only in laws regarding Jews?" It is high time, Zunz goes on, "that Jews in Europe, and especially in Germany, be granted right and freedom instead of rights and freedoms."<sup>51</sup> That scholarship was a means to be used in the battle for right and freedom was for him unquestionable: "Through greater intellectual culture and a more fundamental knowledge of their own affairs, Jews will gain a higher level of recognition, that is, full rights: and thus some errors of judgment in legislation, some prejudices against Jewish antiquity, and some condemnations of new efforts are a direct result of the desolate condition in which for about seventy years, namely in Germany, Jewish literature and scholarship have found themselves."<sup>52</sup>

A few years after this publication, Zunz offered another important reply to a current political challenge. When the Prussians forbade by law the use of Christian proper names by Jews, Zunz was assigned by the Berlin Jewish community to write a study with the title *Names of the Jews (Namen der Juden)*, in which he was to prove that there was a long tradition of "non-Jewish" names among Jews. After soberly listing the names that had been borne by Jews over the centuries and in differing places, the work ended with a kind of legal brief that tried to refute the Prussian proscription:

In recognition of that fidelity, Jews must never be forbidden these new names, even if they have not long since been in their lawful possession, and even if one were authorized to regard them as Christian property. Christianity is a doctrine and a spiritual conception that represents neither land, nor language, nor nation.... Therefore there is no Christian language, any more than there is a Mohammedan, monotheistic, or Lutheran language. Thus names always belong at first to a people and a language, never to a church and a dogma, never to this or that political or religious opinion. Consequently there are no Christian names.... German Jews have no other language, and so proper names belong to them just as lawfully as generic names, and only someone who is able to take the language away from them should forbid names.... What is the purpose of this jumble of documents, of this laborious battle for a right



which only God, not humans, can grant? Body and soul, air and language, mind and sensibility remain the inalienable property of each individual. The possession of names, like the choice of names, is a sanctified right of parents and families upon which no legal document is entitled to infringe.<sup>53</sup>

The first Jewish writer of a multivolume work on Jewish history from biblical times down to the modern age, Isaak Markus Jost, a member of the association along with Zunz and Wolf, was quite aware of the fact that writing Jewish history meant engaging in a political battle against existing prejudices and for emancipation.<sup>54</sup> In Jost's *History of the Israelites*, which appeared between 1820 and 1828 (plus a final volume in 1846), the description of the legal status of Jews, particularly in German states, occupied a disproportionately large part. He repeatedly stressed the centrality of Germany in modern Jewish history as a whole, "because our fatherland is the true soil on which the modern history of the Israelites underwent and is still undergoing its essential development.... Germany's rebirth at the same time gave it [Jewish history in general] life."<sup>55</sup>

Like his predecessor Beer, Jost was also a passionate advocate for internal changes within Judaism. He willingly adopted Protestant biblical criticism and made himself a pioneer in criticism of the Talmud, which he recommended reading like any other literary product created by the hand of man. His criticism of the rabbis of later centuries, especially in the Ashkenazi realm, was more radical; he blamed them for intolerance and the degeneration of Jewish creativity.<sup>56</sup> He explicitly found fault with the lamentable condition of German Jews in early modern times and called on Jews themselves to reform their religion.<sup>57</sup> In earlier times, he argued, the Jews had no opportunity to create noble and beautiful things outside religion. However, in his view this situation had already changed significantly in the nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> With regard to eastern Europe he himself criticized the most respected authorities, such as the Pressburg rabbi Moses ("Hatam") Sofer, who for him embodied the "torpor" of past ages.<sup>59</sup> Some aspects of this critique become comprehensible when we keep in mind his early Jewish education, which he described as mindless and brutal: what the teacher "conveyed was mechanical drilling, and his means were crude words and the cane. I shudder when I look back on that time."<sup>60</sup>

Jost made no attempt to conceal that as a historian, he had a duty to show his generation how Judaism should develop in the future, what

elements should be disposed of, and which forms should be adopted. In doing so he fell into the same contradiction, even regarding his choice of words, as Immanuel Wolf, with his insistence that “scholarly research on Judaism must [decide] the worthiness or unworthiness of the Jews”: “It is high time to close the files on the worthiness or unworthiness of the Jews and of Judaism, and to begin investigating the phenomenon itself, its emergence and development, in order to determine its essence, and if it is found desirable to do so, to change it.”<sup>61</sup> In view of his own experiences it is hardly surprising that he was an opponent of Orthodox Judaism. As Schorsch pointedly put it, “His history amounted to a pedantic and passionless plea for the interment of rabbinic Judaism.... It was Jost’s achievement to legitimize the program of total assimilation with an elaborate historical argument. Twenty-three hundred years of Jewish history were shown to be an egregious mistake, a period deformed by religious monstrosity.”<sup>62</sup> Jost directed a second spear thrust against the continuing anti-Jewish prejudices among the Christian population that had prevented complete emancipation. What is more, he identified himself unconditionally with the battle for emancipation. He emphatically rejected the concept of the Jew and replaced it with Israelite—a term referring only to a religious denomination. According to Jost, German Jews had happily jettisoned every relic of earlier national characteristics and longing for a return to Palestine in favor of their German patriotism and effort to win civil rights. On this subject he wrote in 1828 that “educated Jews gladly sacrificed the advantages of their common but highly corrupted language to gain those of the nobler, more cultivated language of the country, their internal family and tribal allegiances to gain free access to world citizenship and the acquisition of the respect of others, and even the knowledge of the Jewish religion in order to adopt the superior rules of life connected with so-called worldly wisdom.”<sup>63</sup> And two decades later, on the eve of the revolution of 1848, he noted: “They, who had earlier been proud of their isolation, almost delighting in their misery and favoring every way of cutting themselves off from the world, they were happy to be outside any legal jurisdiction, and to be able to enter into the traditional customs of the place where they lived. They feel themselves to be and know that they are members with equal rights in the states to which they belong, even if violence or law still represses them. Just as they once awaited the return to Palestine, now they await unconditional recognition of their civil rights.”<sup>64</sup>

In his search for historical precedents Jost identified the first pioneers of modern civil rights in the age of the founding of Alexandria: “There

the Jews were granted civil rights, and their status was in every regard equal to that of the Greeks and Egyptians. They were distinguished from the Alexandrians not even in name. They gradually became so devoted to their land that although Judea and Egypt had common borders, and treachery was easy, they were still entrusted with important positions.”<sup>65</sup> What reader in 1821 could fail to take into account his own situation when reading this description? Just as the loyalty of the Jews of Alexandria had been rewarded with full civil rights, the German Jews would receive the same reward. To reproach the Jews for having divided loyalties, Jost seems to be saying to non-Jewish opponents of emancipation, is now, in view of the lack of a Jewish state, still more erroneous than it was in the time in which Alexandrian citizens adhering to Judaism were respected even by the neighboring state of Judea. The German road to the emancipation of the Jews was for Jost already marked out in ancient Alexandria, whereas he equated the Polish rabbinical Judaism of his time, which he detested, with the closed and ossified Jewish community of ancient Palestine.<sup>66</sup>

When a few years after the publication of his first work he wrote his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Israeliten* (A General History of the Israelites), he began by noting the still-inadequate state of research on his subject: “That is why there are so many shallow, twisted, groundless prejudices for and against the Israelites themselves; that is why so many pointless, indeed counterproductive steps for the treatment of the Jews are taken by governments.”<sup>67</sup> Here, historiography serves first of all the cause of enlightenment by shedding light on dark ideas about Judaism.

Jost played a leading role in Jewish historiography. The fact that during his lifetime he addressed an extremely limited public was not due to a general lack of interest in history but rather to his theses, which so radically challenged tradition. Thus his work was able to attract only 251 subscribers, while David Ottensooser’s *History of the Jews* (*Geschichte der Jehudim*), which also appeared in 1821, had 412 subscribers. In contrast to Jost, Ottensooser rejected the modern approach of *Wissenschaft*, clung to tradition, and did not question the biblical account of the creation of the world. He published his book in Hebrew characters, and found two-thirds of his readers in rural areas of Franconia and Swabia as well as islands of tradition such as Fürth and Frankfurt.<sup>68</sup> Jost’s approach spread among younger readers even outside the cities, chiefly through Jewish schoolbooks written by Moses Elkan and Ephraim Willstätter toward the end of the 1830s.<sup>69</sup>

On the same basis as Jost—that is, with strong emphasis on the external aspects and especially the legal conditions of Jewish life—Selig Cassel (1821–92) wrote an article more than two hundred pages long about Jewish history for the respected encyclopedia of Johann Samuel Ersch and Johann Gottfried Gruber (1850), which was probably the best comprehensive work on Jewish culture published up to that point. For Cassel, as for Jost and Graetz, Jewish history in the modern era was above all western and central European history, whereas in the Middle Ages the high point was found on the Iberian Peninsula. On the other hand, he had nothing but scorn for the Jewish culture of North Africa. The following remark of his is characteristic of Jewish historiography in the nineteenth century: “The crudest, dullest image of Jewish life in the realm of Islam, however, is provided by the history of the North African states.... Its history, if we except its culture and literature, has nowhere less wavering, alternation, ebb and flow in joy and suffering than here. The monotone steadiness of Oriental life rests on it from the beginning.”<sup>70</sup>

So far as the description of Jewish life in Europe was concerned, Cassel took a position still stronger than Jost’s in denying everything national, representing the Jews of postbiblical times as a purely religious community in the contexts of their respective national surroundings. In 1855, Cassel himself converted to Protestantism, worked as a librarian and a secondary school teacher, and entered the Reichstag as a member of the Conservative Party. Using the new first name of Paulus, he served for more than twenty years as a preacher in the Berlin Church of Christ and was considered the most successful Jewish missionary of his time. Nevertheless, in 1890, after twenty-three years as a missionary to the Jews, he finally had to resign his position, probably because of his vehement defense of the Jews against antisemitic attacks. By that time his historical writings had already been forgotten.<sup>71</sup>

The historical works among the maskilim of eastern Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century generally continued to be more traditionally oriented than those of their neighbors to the west. Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845), who was the editor of the periodical *Ha-me’assef* (*Collector*) between 1808 and 1811, devoted various contributions to the history of the Babylonians and wrote the first modern history composed in Hebrew of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. His work *Kore ha-dorot* (*The Caller of the Generations*, 1838) is an abbreviated adaptation of Jost’s history, although with crucial alterations. Particularly in passages that a more traditional reading public would find provocative, Hacohen

adapts to the social consensus. The same holds for Isaak Baer Levinsohn (1788–1860), whose book *Beyt Yehuda* (*The House of Judah*) was written in 1827–28 but published only a decade later. Levinsohn’s tone is more cautious than Jost’s. Neither Hacoheh nor Levinsohn were iconoclasts, but they both also used Jewish history as a double-edged sword. Internally they wanted to take up arms on behalf of the Haskala, and externally they wanted to convey a positive image of Judaism.<sup>72</sup>

### Jewish Religious History as Counterhistory

On another level, Abraham Geiger led the battle for the recognition of Judaism using scholarly means. His conception of Jewish history as purely intellectual or literary history may be explained by the fact that he was first of all a theologian and the cofounder of Liberal Judaism, which promoted religious reforms. As a rabbi in Wiesbaden, Breslau, Frankfurt am Main, and Berlin, and also as the editor of two Jewish prayer books, he was a practical man. At the same time he made his name as an expert on Islam with his 1833 dissertation, “What Did Mohammed Take from Judaism?” (*Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*). In his most important work, *Urschrift und Übersetzung der Bibel*, 1857 (*The Original Text and Translation of the Bible*), Geiger introduced the methods of Protestant biblical criticism into *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Finally, his studies on Jesus, whom he described, to the dismay of Christian theologians, as a pharisaical Jew, were to make him known if not always liked far beyond Jewish milieus.

Geiger’s view that early Christianity had distorted Jesus’s teaching, and that in subsequent centuries Christians had completely departed from his conceptions, alienated his Christian contemporaries, as much as his conviction that the Talmud distorted true Jewish doctrine provoked many of his own coreligionists.<sup>73</sup> Whereas Zunz and Jost sought to correct specific legal disadvantages, Geiger’s scholarly work was directed toward a different goal. He tried to prove that the two great world religions, Christianity and Islam, were constructed on the basis of Judaism, and that both the Koran and the New Testament had borrowed heavily from Jewish rabbinical literature. For Geiger, Judaism represented a truly new form of religion, whereas Christianity and Islam were only derivatives from it. He was probably well aware of how provocative Christians would find the conclusion at which his studies arrived: “Christianity and Islam have the outward form of Judaism ... without establishing a new religion.”<sup>74</sup>

Geiger's new historical approach was a direct reaction to the theological anti-Judaism of the nineteenth century. In particular, he fought against the popular distinction between the Old Testament God of wrath and the New Testament God of love, the generally negative representation of both ancient and modern Judaism, and the proselytizing enterprises of Christian theologians. Whereas "Pharisee" was used by Christians as term of abuse, Geiger sought, to the annoyance of Christian theologians, to present Jesus as a Pharisee. According to Geiger, Jesus was a faithful Jew who observed the prescriptions of the law. In complete opposition to the medieval Jewish tradition, which saw Jesus as a traitor and deceiver, and also to Jost's early works (though not to his later work of 1857), Geiger's criticism was directed against the apostles and not against the person of Jesus.<sup>75</sup> In his view, the Apostles were the ones who had carried out the break with Judaism.

As Susannah Heschel in her study on Geiger makes clear, the representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* should be regarded not only as apologists for emancipation but as critics of the values current in the nineteenth-century German academic system as well. "The gaze of historical theology was Christian; the ordering of history, the questions that were raised, the evidence examined, all revolved around the central issue, explaining the rise of Christianity," observes Heschel.<sup>76</sup> Drawing on Edward Said, according to whom the Western construction of "Orientalism" is to be traced back to European scholarship on Islam, Heschel understands the new way of viewing Jewish sources and also the inclusion of Islamic culture primarily by German Jewish scholars as a "revolt of the colonized against Christian hegemony."<sup>77</sup> In no other representative of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is this more apparent than in Geiger, whose counterhistory produced outrage among Christians. By reading the sources of his opponents against the grain ("*gegen den Strich*") he tried to defeat anti-Jewish elements in German scholarship with their own weapons.<sup>78</sup>

Geiger was both one of the main pillars of the Jewish Reform movement in Germany and one of the most important representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. He was not always able to separate these two sides of his activity, and did not always regard such a separation as ideal. Instead, he considered history, as did many of his cocombatants, as the foundation on which his theological practice should progress: "History and criticism ... is therefore the primary scholarly task of the present time, without which a thriving practice is not imaginable." Specifically,

for Geiger this meant that he was, as he himself said, “always trying to work with the inner core and from it draw results for reform.”<sup>79</sup>

Like Jost, and even more vehemently than the latter, Geiger insisted that postbiblical Jewish history lacked a political history and as a consequence Jewish historiography was first of all intellectual history. It should not “deal with external history, since the latter has no organic context, is a mere aggregate, and therefore resists even the most skillful treatment.”<sup>80</sup> Thus for Geiger, external history is to be dealt with as simply part of the history of the peoples among whom Jews lived. This conception was later vehemently contested by Dubnow and especially Zionist historians, who were fond of referring to the “organic” nature of Jewish history and therefore sought to prove that there was a unified national Jewish life under the most diverse kinds of domination.

By seeking to establish a continuous development and reform of the Jewish religion historically, Geiger breaks with some aspects of the traditional Jewish view of history, probably most obviously with his assessment of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Whereas in traditional Judaism this is commemorated as the greatest tragedy of Jewish history and was lamented by Zionist historians as the downfall of ancient Jewish statehood, for the religious reformers it was the founding act of a modern religion freed from the bonds of animal sacrifice and connection with a specific place. For historians who identified with Reform ideas, a more decisive act in the survival of Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple was the founding of an academy in Yavneh by Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai, who according to legend had himself carried out of Jerusalem in a coffin during the Roman siege of the city. Henceforth, it was through study that Judaism was supposed to have been kept alive and to defy any physical force.<sup>81</sup> Geiger drew a distinction between the Jews as a people and a religious community. In postbiblical times, he thought, they were only the latter. Here too, we discern a political goal, for only as a religious minority—and not, for example, as a people—could Jews be integrated into the various nations in the course of emancipation. Geiger considered the dissolution of national elements and the dissemination among all peoples as the mission of modern Judaism to spread pure monotheism throughout the world.<sup>82</sup>

He was surely not alone in holding this view. Jost, for instance, commented on the Romans’ destruction of the Second Temple as follows: “Thus the embers consuming the remains of the Temple became the dawn-glow of the Jewish religion, and the storms that scattered the people in all directions became the heralds of a new creation, a share of

whose blessings was soon received by all receptive peoples.”<sup>83</sup> In another passage we read, “The nation had to fall, it was an earthly, transitory structure; the community arose again, it was a spiritual whole.”<sup>84</sup>

The destruction of the Temple was a crucial factor in the Jews’ mission among other peoples. The religious Reform movement regarded the spread of the idea of monotheism as an important task of Jewish life—a task that could not be completed within a narrow statehood but instead presupposed diaspora as a way of life. It is precisely this, argued historians associated with this notion, that distinguishes Jewish history from that of other nations and religious communities.

Samuel Bäck (1834–1912), whose one-volume Jewish history appeared in 1878 and was later reedited by his son Leo Baeck, considered the tragedy to be above all a liberation: “And after the restricting fetters of political ambition had been broken, the spirit of Judaism was able to develop all the more purely and richly.” Whereas Yohanan ben Zakai and his companions were praised for having borne “the shattering of their state with tranquility and resignation,” and sacrificing political independence for the sake of maintaining and renewing their religion, the image given of the Bar Kokhba political activists, whose resistance ended in a traumatic defeat, seems considerably more negative.<sup>85</sup>

Like Geiger, Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903), the founder of folk psychology and a professor of philosophy in Berlin, rejected the existence of a unified postbiblical Jewish history. In 1900 he gave a speech on the subject, “What Do Jewish History and Literature Mean, and Why Are They Studied?” in which he insisted that after the destruction of the Second Temple, there was no Jewish history as such, but only a history of Jews and Judaism. “We are living through Prussian history, German history, French history; we are members, parts of these nations; that is the historical life, which we feel and live for our part as Jews. —But there is no longer any Jewish history.” Mere suffering, Lazarus maintained, still produces no common history, while “historical action ceased with the end of independent statehood.”<sup>86</sup>

The religious reformers were not the only representatives of German Judaism who tried to put scholarship in the service of religion. One of the characteristics of the modern Orthodoxy that arose in the mid-nineteenth century in reaction to the religious Reform movement was its openness toward worldly education and culture, academic scholarship, and university study. The limits of openness were, however, clearly set. Criticism of texts that were regarded as divinely inspired seemed as disturbing to its representatives as did the fact that not only radical reformers like Beer



but also moderate representatives of research on Judaism like Zunz spoke out harshly against Talmudic studies and “rabbinism.” There was general agreement that Jewish scholarship could not operate under the aegis of Orthodoxy and remain value-free or presuppositionless. But was it permissible to use the methods of secular scholarship in order to propagate Orthodoxy’s goals?<sup>87</sup> In particular, the founder of modern Orthodoxy, the Frankfurt rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–88), tolerated no compromises with regard to the relativization of sacred sources, including rabbinical literature. Nonetheless, he tried, at least within his circle, to give centuries-old traditional study a modern appearance. While strongly attacking *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and insisting on the obligation to believe, he called for a Jewish scholarship that could be justified only if its goal was to increase the understanding of Jewish life. “In accord with this goal, everything connected to it [*Wissenschaft des Judentums*] is to bear the stamp of responsible research and well-informed scholarship, while bringing in the most attractive form the results of research, the fruits of scholarly thought for life, to an educated readership.” The “spirit of the Jewish view of the world” was as much a part of the task his periodical *Jeschurun* set itself as was the description of institutions resting on the foundation of the Jewish law.<sup>88</sup> Scholarship could not be an end in itself; instead, it must serve to strengthen religious life.

More moderate Orthodox rabbis like the founder of the Berlin Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary, Esriel Hildesheimer (1820–99), who had studied with Ranke and used modern scholarly methods to defend Jewish traditions, were more committed to the idea of scholarship, but they too recognized clear limits when the divine origin of either the Bible or the Talmud was called into doubt.<sup>89</sup> Hildesheimer’s rabbinical seminary in Berlin produced a series of important critical texts of rabbinical manuscripts and studies on modern history. In periodicals such as the *Magazin für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* (Journal for Jewish History and Literature, 1874–93) and in the *Jewish Literary Association* (founded in 1902), we can see how this new Orthodox conception of scholarship had to tread a narrow path of observing academic standards without harming religious dogmas.<sup>90</sup>

Positive-Historical Judaism, later also called Conservative Judaism, adopted a median position between Reform and Orthodoxy. Its leader was Rabbi Zacharias Frankel (1801–75), the founder of both the new discipline’s most important periodical (*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 1851) and the first modern rabbinical sem-

inary in Germany (the Jewish Theological Seminary, opened in Breslau in 1854). Although Frankel had great respect for rabbinical tradition, he doubted that all the Mishna's laws were divine in origin. Like countless other representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Frankel thought he could combine an objective, scholarly perspective with the defense of Jewish belief. *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Frankel maintained, could lead to a "perfect knowledge" about Jews and Judaism. In fact, Frankel went so far as to define *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a "scholarship of belief": Judaism "calls for research, for thought, it does not want spiritual darkness, and—this is its pride—it does not need to be afraid of scholarship; but first comes belief: it is the banner, the guide, and it constantly changes in light of the Eternal."<sup>91</sup> With the exception of part of Orthodoxy, the representatives of all the religious trends within German Judaism agreed that scholarship could help sustain Judaism. They set different limits for themselves, and only a few allowed the true core, the Hebrew Bible, to become the target of historical criticism.

In a stimulating article, historian Michael Meyer asked whether the goal of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was first of all scholarship or Judaism.<sup>92</sup> Although it is clear that both were dear to the hearts of most of these scholars, there were differences in emphasis: whereas theologians like Geiger or Frankel laid the greatest weight on the revival of Judaism through scholarship, scholars operating outside the theological spectrum, such as Zunz or, still more extreme, Steinschneider, were most interested in making scholarship flourish with the help of Judaism. However, despite all their differences, the political ambitions of Zunz, Jost, Geiger, and other representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* coincided in one respect: they vehemently demanded the inclusion of the study of Judaism in the university framework. As a part of the emancipation of Jews, the study of Jews also had to be emancipated. Geiger's attempt to found a faculty of Jewish theology, whose creation he urged, for instance, in a text written in 1838, and the application that Zunz submitted to the Prussian ministry of religion ten years later, proposing that a professorship of Jewish history and literature be established, failed, as did similar attempts made in German universities during the whole of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.<sup>93</sup> The academic study of Jewish history remained confined for the most part to seminars devoted to the training of rabbis, while from the mid-nineteenth century on, readers' associations, libraries, book clubs, and periodicals disseminated historical literature on Judaism.<sup>94</sup>

## One Religion among Numerous Nations

Germany was the homeland of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and remained its center well into the twentieth century. However, within a single generation, among Europe's other Jewish communities, scholarly work on their own past spread quickly. This section will offer examples showing how the history of the Jews was used as a weapon in the battle for religious reform and emancipation in other countries. In doing so, historians emphasized the special importance for Jewish history of the respective national contexts: the French used the Revolution as the starting point for Jewish modernity, the British insisted on their history of tolerance toward Jews, and Hungary constructed particularly deep roots of Magyar-Jewish coexistence.

In nineteenth-century France, Jewish historians no longer needed to battle for emancipation, since despite some later setbacks, equal rights had already become a reality in 1790 or 1791, as one of the achievements of the Revolution.<sup>95</sup> But even in France, though under different conditions than in Germany and in a different social structure, in the nineteenth century Jewish historiography was put in the service of the ideology of emancipation—if not as part of a struggle for a still-distant goal, then at least as an effort to preserve what had been accomplished. This included representing Jewish history of the modern age as the history of a religious denomination, the Jews as French patriots, and the Revolution as the culmination of the history of humanity as well as Jewish history.<sup>96</sup>

The writings of one of the most remarkable figures in nineteenth-century French Jewry, the noted historian of religion Joseph Salvador (1796–1873), spread the notion that the doctrines of the French Revolution had taken their inspiration from the ancient Mosaic legal system. In his view, the latter contained a democratic social contract based on the separation of powers that provided the starting point for the struggle against reactionary kings and clerics.<sup>97</sup> Similar trains of thought are found in the first French Jewish author of a modern history of the Jews, the Saint-Simonian Léon Halévy (1802–83), a brother of the opera composer Jacques Fromental Halévy. In his 1825 *Brief History of the Ancient Jews* (*Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs anciens*), it is not difficult to discern his ideological positions. His apology for the republic also characterizes his perspective on the past: “The government of Israel, as it was introduced by Moses, was a republic without a king; but its king was God.”<sup>98</sup>

Three years later, when he published his *Brief History of the Modern Jews* (*Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes*), the relationship to the

present was even more obvious. In this work, based above all on the works of Christian scholars such as Basnage, Halévy, like his German colleagues, supported the Reform efforts within Judaism. As for Beer, Jost, or Geiger, for him too the Judaism that had originated in the Orient had to adapt to the new circumstances of the time in Europe. Like French proponents of emancipation, Halévy took for granted the necessity of changing Jewish rites and practices. Admittedly, he was at least as enthusiastic about the achievements of the French Revolution. The goals achieved in France allowed him to look on the rest of Europe with confidence. The spread of the French Revolution's goals would bring with it the final liberation of the Jews from their shackles, and "ensure the victory of intelligence over violence and create the foundations for a universal morality."<sup>99</sup> Halévy left no doubt about the goal of his own work: "It will certainly be [useful] insofar as I will have proved to the fanatic Christians (if there still remain any) or to the unenlightened Christians (which is more common) that the Jews are not only men, but useful, active men, with a distinguished character, worthy of liberty, and who have done much for it; and to the Jews, that if time grants them new rights, it also imposes upon them new duties."<sup>100</sup> Like the founders of German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Halévy used scholarship as a double-edged sword: on the one hand, in fighting for equal rights, and on the other hand, for reforming the Jewish religion, which Halévy regarded as "too Asiatic for European nations."<sup>101</sup>

Just as German Jewish historians considered the history of Germany's Jews to be central to modern Jewish history, Jewish historians beyond the Rhine exaggerated the importance of the French experience of Jewish history. For Lion Mayer Lambert (1787–1862), the chief rabbi of Metz and the author of a history of the Jews "From Abraham down to 1840," the French government's decision in 1830 to provide rabbis with financial support was "the greatest act of justice that the Hebrews had obtained since the destruction of the Second Temple."<sup>102</sup> For later chroniclers like Maurice Bloch, "the time of the Messiah had come with the French Revolution," and Isidore Cahen saw in the Revolution "the second law of Sinai."<sup>103</sup>

The best known of the French Jewish historians at the end of the nineteenth century, Théodore Reinach (1860–1928), a professor of classical archaeology at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, endorsed in his *Histoire des Israélites* (1884) the widely held view according to which centuries of oppression had caused Jews to degenerate morally and physically, and that only "tolerance and equal rights would

again make them into men worthy of a place among the best and most useful citizens.”<sup>104</sup> Reinach also took a position on the issue of religious development. According to his historical interpretation, “The purely ceremonial laws [are] simple pious practices of only limited religious value that have their analogues in other religions. They are alien to the religion of the prophets itself, and in the past they played a valuable role as protective shells around dangerous thoughts.” In the age of Enlightenment, however, ceremonial law dissolves by itself, because it has lost its original meaning. The Jews have ceased to constitute a nation and are only members of a religious denomination whose patriotism is in no way inferior to that of their Christian contemporaries.<sup>105</sup>

Similar assessments are found in the work of James Darmesteter (1849–94), a professor of Iranian culture at the Collège de France and the author of a *Philosophy of the History of the Jewish People*, and Léon Kahn (1851–1900), the general secretary of the Paris Consistory and the author of a history of Paris’s Jews during the Revolution: with the dawn of the revolutionary age, an oppressed minority of pariahs experienced a process of bodily and spiritual renewal. Because of their exemplary behavior during the Revolution, Kahn argues, Jews proved that they were worthy of emancipation. Michael Marrus summarizes the position of all these authors as follows: “The work of these historians was the work of assimilation. Not only did their histories point the way to ending the idea of the dispersed nation, not only did they magnify beyond the point of distortion the significance of the Revolution of 1789, they also merged the very history of the Jews with the history of French civilization.”<sup>106</sup>

A further example of Jewish historical writing under the aegis of the battle for emancipation is provided by the accounts of the history of the Jews in Hungary published during the nineteenth century. They emphasized the deep roots of Jews in the Magyar area and painted a generally harmonious image of Jewish-Hungarian coexistence over the centuries.

In his many writings on the history of Jews in Hungary, the pioneer of Hungarian Jewish historiography, Leopold Löw (1811–75), argued that in the Middle Ages, the lot of Jews had been significantly better than in western Europe. The Hungarian rulers, he said, had shown themselves relatively tolerant with regard to the Jews.<sup>107</sup> Like many of his German Jewish colleagues, in both the external battle for emancipation and the internal debates between reformers and representatives of Orthodoxy, Löw took a position in favor of the former.<sup>108</sup> In his first major work on this theme, published in 1846–47, he already made his position clear. Beginning with the granting of rights to Jews in the Middle Ages, Löw

pointed to the contrast between the favorable conditions in Hungary and the discriminatory practices in German states. Whereas in the German Reich they were regarded as chattels owned by the king, whom “the Reich could sell or pledge forever or temporarily,” in Hungary the laws showed “that at this time Jewish Hungarian residents enjoyed the rights of free, indigenous residents.”<sup>109</sup>

In his observations on modern history, Löw gave special attention to the struggle of Hungarian Jews for emancipation. He never grew tired of emphasizing that the reproach that Jews adhered first of all to their own nationality was erroneous: “Through their spokesmen, Jews have hundreds of times declared and repeated that they are not a nation, but a religious community, and that they are absorbed into the nationalities of the nations in which they happen to live.” As a historian, Löw wanted to show that this obligation of nationality was not at all a “result of the modern emancipation movement.” According to Löw, ancient Jewish history was already a perfect example of assimilation to the surrounding populations. After they came into contact with the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, the Jews adopted their nationality and language, and received civil rights in return. “And this phenomenon was repeated in all countries in all periods.”<sup>110</sup> In this connection it may not be irrelevant that Löw—like many nineteenth-century Hungarian Jewish rabbis and scholars—came from Moravia and therefore had a double obligation to prove his loyalty to Hungary. When he moved to Hungary in 1840, he spoke no Hungarian, but four years later, as chief rabbi he gave a sermon in Hungarian.<sup>111</sup>

The second generation of Hungarian Jewish historians—for instance, those gathered around the national rabbinical seminary founded in 1877 or the Israelite-Hungarian Literary Society—saw itself as Löw’s successors, but nonetheless sought to achieve a broader scholarly basis. The *Monumenta Hungariae Judaica* was perhaps this generation’s most important product. Historians of the second generation, such as Sámuel Kohn (1840–1920), who had studied with Graetz in Breslau and later became the chief rabbi of Pest, pushed still further the thesis that Hungarian Jews had been integrated into Hungarian society. Kohn even proposed that Jews and Magyars shared a common origin. In the early Middle Ages, he claimed, part of the Khazar tribes that had converted to Judaism, the Khabars, joined the Hungarian people and together they settled the Carpathian region. According to this view, at least some of the Hungarian Jews were therefore descendants of these “original Hungarians.”<sup>112</sup> This theory, which found no support among scholars, was

supposed to prove an ancient connection between Jews and Hungarians. According to Kohn, Jews were always better off in Hungary than in any other country of the region.<sup>113</sup>

Until well into the twentieth century, this Romantic, optimistic vision in Hungarian Jewish historiography could claim that Jews were an integral part of the oldest Hungarian history and expressed themselves in the voice of religious reform. Little room remained here for critical remarks.<sup>114</sup> Only toward the end of the twentieth century did historians gain sufficient distance to conclude that Hungarian-Jewish historiography had from the outset a well-defined political goal: not merely to describe historical events, but also to justify integration.<sup>115</sup>

In Bohemia, the historian Marcus Fischer went so far as to write a false chronicle of the Bohemian Jews from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. With the help of this forgery, the so-called Ramshak Chronicle, he tried to prove that Jews had roots in Bohemia, and even supported the first efforts of a Czech nationalist movement by emphasizing the good relationships between Jews and Czechs during the Hussite Revolt. Fischer also claimed that there had been a Czech Jewish community alongside a German and Sephardic one in medieval Prague.<sup>116</sup>

Similarly, in the second half of the nineteenth century, historians sought to support the emancipation of Jews in Russia by showing that they had sunk deep roots in Russian soil. A few of these historians pointed to the Russian Jews' Slavic origins and claimed, like Halévy, that they had originally spoken Slavic languages. Others tried to show that the Russian Jews were descended from Khazars converted to Judaism and did not emigrate to Russia at all. Still others dated their presence in the Caucasus as far back as the destruction of the First Temple, or reconstructed, like Abraham Firkovitch in his studies (which were later shown to have been based partly on documents he had forged), an original settlement in southern Russia of a community of Karaites who did not adhere to the Talmud. All these legends about the founding of communities had the secondary effect of preventing the suspicion of "Christ killing" from falling on local Jewish communities, since according to them their ancestors had lived in Europe long before Jesus.<sup>117</sup> However, they also and especially served the emancipation of the Jews. If the latter had so long made their homes on Russian soil, then they had a natural right to an improvement of their legal situation. Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century the legal history of the Jews acquired a central place in Russian Jewish historiography. Its declared goal was to prove that only legal discrimination stood in the way of the desired assimilation of the Jews. Remarkably enough,

alongside the Jewish journalist I. G. Orshanski, it was a non-Jewish historian, Sergei Bershadski (1850–96), who distinguished himself through a multitude of works. In his opinion, it was primarily the ignorance of the Russian population that hindered the integration of the Jews. Bershadski, who had become acquainted with an enlightened Jewish population group while he was studying in Odessa, wanted his publications to help remove this obstacle.<sup>118</sup>

In Poland, the historian Hilary (Hillel) Nussbaum (1820–95) not only preached Polish-Jewish symbiosis as a model for the future but also saw it as having been realized in the present.<sup>119</sup> Nussbaum's goal of "Polishizing" the Jews and rejecting Orthodoxy was manifested in many of his writings. Thus in his work Polish rabbis seemed to operate out of the darkness of superstition. In the autonomy of Jewish communities, he saw a "cancerous growth that destroyed and continues to destroy the organization of Polish Jewry."<sup>120</sup> However, his chief battle was fought against Hasidism, which he condemned as a failed attempt at reforming the domination of the rabbis and sought to fight by means of historiography.<sup>121</sup> His younger colleague, Alexander Kraushar (1843–1931), who converted to Catholicism in 1895, had written an initial comprehensive history in 1865–66 of Jews in Poland, while he was still a student, and (like another convert, Ludwik Gumplowicz, in his legal history of the Jews in Poland published in 1867) defended the assimilation of Polish Jews. They all blamed not only ecclesiastical prescriptions but also Talmudic laws and the rabbis for maintaining separatist religious laws.<sup>122</sup> Kraushar took part in the January Uprising of 1863 and urged the use of radical means for the complete assimilation of the Jews. His most important work was no doubt his *History of the Frankist Messianic Sects*, an account of the sects founded by Jakob Frank that had converted to Catholicism in eighteenth-century Poland.<sup>123</sup> As Kraushar explained in his foreword, this work was also intended to have a political function: to convince Polish readers that the descendants of the generation of Frankists who converted to Catholicism were "true and faithful Christians and citizens of their country."<sup>124</sup>

In concluding this chapter, let us now return to western Europe.<sup>125</sup> During the nineteenth century there was only a small Jewish community in England, going back to the seventeenth century and the readmission of the Jews under Oliver Cromwell, after almost four centuries during which no Jews had lived in the country. Their history in modern England is, in comparison with other European countries, largely free of persecution and marked by increasing assimilation.<sup>126</sup> When British Jewish historians began to study the history of the Jews in England, it was easy



for them to describe it as characterized by tolerance. At first, their books were located in the area between fiction and historiography. Among these authors was Benjamin Disraeli's father, Isaac Disraeli (1766–1848), who complained in his book *The Genius of Judaism* that the history of the Jews had too long been written by their opponents. Grace Aguilar (1816–47) presented a similar argument; in her work she also discussed the immigration of Spanish and Portuguese Jews into England, which was for her “the blessed land.”<sup>127</sup>

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the scholarly rigor of the methods used by English Jewish historians increased, but their fundamentally patriotic attitude persisted. The 250th anniversary of the readmission of the Jews under Cromwell was celebrated by English Jewish historians in 1894. During the whole of the nineteenth century, they pointed out that it was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and a resettlement of part of them in England that had allowed the United Kingdom to outstrip Spain both economically and politically. Lucien Wolf (1857–1930), one of the most important spokesmen of British Jewry at the turn of the twentieth century, still vehemently maintained that although British Jews had not produced any important rabbis or cultural figures, they had played a crucial role in Britain's rise to the rank of a great world power.<sup>128</sup> Wolf made himself one of the driving forces behind the professionalization of English Jewish historiography, above all by organizing the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition of 1887, and six years later founding the Jewish Historical Society of England, of which he was for a long time the president.<sup>129</sup>

The Jewish Historical Society of England's chief goal was to show the contribution that British Jews had made to the well-being of their country and thereby to decrease antisemitism. Nonetheless, here as well the postulate was objectivity. Thus, the British Jewish historian Israel Abrahams (1858–1925) argued, in the positivist context of his time, that history “is a branch of science, and its methods must be severely scientific—critical, systematic, minutely analytical of sources.... The new theory of History proclaims that laxity in dealing with evidence is criminal, and that the only end to be aimed at is scrupulous conformity to the fact.... An historical society must necessarily range itself with the new objective theory of historical science, and must leave to individuals the formation of a subjective philosophy of history.”<sup>130</sup>

In his analysis, Mitchell Hart nevertheless comes to the conclusion that the Jewish Historical Society of England had worked out “an Anglo-Jewish history of progress” that led from the readmission through the

emancipation edict to tolerance and the integration of the Jews into civil society, and whose intonation was oriented by the liberal tradition.<sup>131</sup>

In the United States, Charles Gross, a historian at Harvard University, tried to put the foundation of the American Jewish Historical Society in 1892 in the service of the integration of American Jews: “The object of this society will be to reveal what the Jews have done. It will certainly be made evident that the Jews of this country have been ready to offer up life and fortune for this country.... If we can once make that plain through the researches of the society it seems to me we will accomplish a great deal to elevate the position of the Jews in America and to dispel prejudice.”<sup>132</sup> The society’s first president, Oscar Straus, always emphasized the importance of the role played by American Jews in the construction of the country, and compared the achievements of the Marranos driven out of the Iberian Peninsula with those of the Pilgrims. In this connection, he commissioned the German Jewish historian Moritz Kayserling to write a history of the Jews’ participation in the discovery of America, adding the express wish that this study “bring to light the extent to which our race had a direct part and share with Columbus in the discovery of our Continent.”<sup>133</sup> This would represent an “answer for all time to come to any antisemitic tendencies in this country which doubtless will come to the surface sooner or later by reason of the large Russian immigration to our country.” With this and similar statements, American Jewish historians tried to counter the objection that Jews had come to the United States too late to contribute to its development.

A century after Mendelssohn’s death, the lack of interest in history expressed by the Berlin philosopher was no longer characteristic of the following generation. In the mid-nineteenth century, Cassel had already clearly stated how much Judaism now appealed precisely to its history (see the quotation at the beginning of this chapter). And at the end of the century still more explicit statements appeared in the most important German Jewish newspaper, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*: “History is Judaism’s sanctuary.... It dignifies its existence and ... constitutes an essential foundation for its doctrine.”<sup>134</sup>

The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* of the nineteenth century has provided down to the present day the foundation for research on the Jewish past. Over the succeeding generations, writers on Jewish history built their structures of ideas on this base. The “founders of the discipline” produced numerous important scholarly works that lived on beyond their own period. At the same time, however, they shaped a scholarly discipline that used the weapons of historiography to elaborate new Jewish

identities. All over Europe, during the nineteenth century historiography was part of the battle among Jews for their emancipation, their identification with their respective nation-states, and their striving for religious reform. What for Jews had earlier been one Jewish history was now transformed by historians into several Jewish histories in the respective national contexts.

At the same time, during the second half of the nineteenth century a new variant of Jewish historiography developed that put passionate emphasis on the existence of a unified Jewish national history. Its beginnings are found in the work of the most important Jewish historian of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Graetz.

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Fig. 2.1 Max Liebermann, *The Twelve-Year-Old Jesus in the Temple*, 1879. (Top) Oil on canvas. Hamburg Art Museum. akg-images. (Bottom) Chalk drawing, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin National Museums. Photo credit: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.



## 2. BETWEEN RELIGION AND NATION

### *Graetz and His Construction of Jewish History*

The history of modern Jews is tragic, and if you write about the tragic, people still laugh at you—and that is the most tragic thing of all.

—Heinrich Heine, *Aphorisms*

WHEN MAX LIEBERMANN presented his painting *The Twelve-Year-Old Jesus in the Temple* at the International Art Show in Munich in July 1879, he could not have foreseen that it would trigger a heated political debate in which even the later Prince Regent Luitpold and the Bavarian State Parliament would take part. The annoyance of traditionalists in Bavaria was so great that the picture finally had to be removed from the show. The reason for their anger was not the artistic form but rather the choice of subject. In the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, the influential critic Friedrich Pecht expressed his outrage at the depiction of “the ugliest little Jewish know-it-all one can imagine” and the “pack of greasy, haggling Jews of the worst kind.... The picture offends not only our feeling but our noses, because it awakens all kinds of unfavorable memories.” And in the *Vossische Zeitung*, Ludwig Pietsch mocked his old enemy: “He shifts the scene to a genuine Polish small-town synagogue. His boy Jesus, a bare-legged, dirty youth ... does not show any signs of great intelligence.” Luitpold asked that the picture be relegated to a side gallery, and in the Bavarian State Parliament the delegate Dr. Daller was still complaining in January 1880 that “the lofty divine subject of this picture is represented in such a common and low way that any believing Christian must feel deeply offended by this blasphemous picture.”<sup>1</sup>

Liebermann portrayed a barefoot Jesus with a not very winning appearance, and in an explicitly Jewish milieu, in a synagogue amid praying Jews with long beards, caftans, fur hats, and blue and white prayer shawls. Giving Jesus such human and such Jewish traits was tantamount to an unreasonable provocation, especially when the artist was himself a Jew. Liebermann gave artistic form to an image of the Jewish Jesus that the historians Geiger and Graetz had already drafted in a scholarly fashion a few years earlier. At the time of the Munich exhibit, however,

the context had changed in threatening ways. That explains why after public criticism, Liebermann himself painted over his original Jesus, taking away his “Jewish” appearance by giving him long blond hair instead of sidelocks, putting sandals on him, straightening his stooped back, and turning his prominent nose into a little snub nose. The painting now on display in the Hamburg Art Museum can give us hardly any notion of how provocative the one in the Munich exhibit was. Just as works of art can be repainted, history can be rewritten.

The year of the scandal related to Liebermann’s Jesus, 1879, was crucial in the development of anti-Jewish agitation in Germany. The word anti-semitism first came into use in that year, spread by an obscure journalist named Wilhelm Marr, who in his book prophesied, as its title indicated, *The Triumph of Judaism over Germandom*.<sup>2</sup> The so-called antisemitism controversy raged in Berlin after the historian Heinrich von Treitschke, in an article published in the respected periodical *Preußische Jahrbücher*, warned against “trouser-peddling youths” from the East, “whose children and children’s children are destined to control the stock exchange and newspapers that used to be German.” It was in this connection that the expression “the Jews are our misfortune”—later used by the Nazi Julius Streicher on every title page of his infamous journal *Der Stürmer*—first emerged.<sup>3</sup> If Treitschke made antisemitism acceptable in academia, the court preacher Adolf Stoecker used a political movement founded on the basis of enmity against Jews. It may be doubted whether Liebermann was right in asserting, in a 1911 letter to Alfred Lichtwark, that Wilhelm I’s court preacher first became an antisemite as a result of his picture of Jesus. But a connection between the anti-Jewish atmosphere around the Munich Art Show and the so-called Berlin antisemitism controversy is entirely possible.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, a movement opposing antisemitism arose in the circle of liberal thinkers like Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), who called antisemitism the “conviction of the rabble, a horrifying epidemic, like cholera.”<sup>5</sup> It was above all the Jews themselves who took part in this debate, and in the front rank stood a Jewish colleague of Treitschke’s and Mommsen’s: Heinrich Graetz. For Treitschke, Graetz’s passionate *History of the Jews* was as great a provocation as Liebermann’s painting had been for the Munich art critics. Both Liebermann’s Jesus and Graetz’s portrayal of Jewish history documented a new Jewish self-confidence in the age of emancipation won after lengthy battles. If Moritz Daniel Oppenheim’s Biedermeier portraits corresponded to Jost’s vision of a Judaism

reduced to a religious denomination, then Liebermann's original painting illustrates Graetz's conviction that Judaism could not be described from the outside. When he thought it necessary, Graetz did not go easy on German history and Christian religion. In his defense of Judaism, he not only took a resolute position against obvious enemies such as Treitschke but also against supposed friends such as Mommsen, who regarded baptism as the only way of completely integrating German Jews.<sup>6</sup> "If you want to be included as equals in our society, dissolve or sink into Christianity.... The minority must consider it an honor to be absorbed by the majority," was Graetz's ironic commentary on Mommsen's recommendation.<sup>7</sup> In a personal letter, he asked their common friend Jakob Bernays to disabuse Mommsen of the notion that Jews must allow themselves to be baptized in order to become good Germans: "He treats us Jews very mercifully, but at what a price! We are supposed to merge completely with Christianity."<sup>8</sup>

Graetz was the only contemporary writer attacked by Treitschke: "Just read this *History of the Jews* by Graetz: what fanatical rage against the 'hereditary enemy,' Christianity, what lethal hatred precisely against the purest and most powerful representatives of Germanic existence, from Luther down to Goethe and Fichte! And what a hollow, offensive overestimation of his own abilities! By constant malicious, insulting tirades, he tries to prove that the nation of Kant was actually first educated in humanity by the Jews, that the language of Lessing and Goethe first became capable of beauty, spirit, and wit through Börne and Heine."<sup>9</sup> Graetz countered that he had felt it his duty to "provide an account of the thousands of bloody, pitiless persecutions of my fellow Jews, and wanted it to be in accord with the truth. Should I have falsified history?"<sup>10</sup>

For Graetz, the rejection of the Jews was not an abstract subject. He had grown up in one of the small communities in the Prussian province of Posen, which had until recently still belonged to Poland. During his youth, he had seen that in the towns of his homeland, Jews did not yet enjoy civil rights. His original first name in Yiddish was Hirsh (he generally published his work under the neutral abbreviation H. Graetz).<sup>11</sup> Later on, he took his degree in Jena, because the Faculty of Philosophy in Breslau did not yet allow Jews to graduate. Even when Graetz was already a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau and an honorary professor at the University of Breslau, Treitschke contested his Germanness: "Herr Graetz is a foreigner on the soil of his 'accidental land of birth,' an Oriental, who neither understands nor wants to under-



stand our people; he has nothing in common with us other than the fact that he possesses our rights as citizens and uses our native language—although he uses it to malign us.”<sup>12</sup>

These words were directed against “the most agile, most many-faceted, and most effective nineteenth-century representative of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.”<sup>13</sup> Between 1853 and 1876, Graetz published the eleven volumes of his *History of the Jews*, which is today considered the classic work of Jewish historiography of the nineteenth century. Graetz became, especially with the publication of his three-volume *Popular History of the Jews* (*Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden*, 1888), probably the most widely read writer on Jewish history. He owed this role less to his exceptional scholarship than to his passionate capacity for enthusiasm, his unbridled pugnacity, and his mostly pointed historical judgments. As Schorsch has remarked, in this sense Graetz and his later opponent Treitschke (here we might add other names, such as Michelet and Macaulay) were in fact “cut from the same cloth and used history for the same ends.”<sup>14</sup> Just as Treitschke spiced his historiography with passion and clear political opinions, Graetz was anything but a cool, distanced chronicler. Meyer has correctly noted that “however differently they regarded the modern Jew, Graetz and Treitschke were remarkably alike in the manner of their historiography. For neither man was historical scholarship merely an antiquarian interest. They both wrote as much or more to educate and inspire as to add to historical knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> The controversy between the two historians turned around the past, but referred to the present. Just as Treitschke saw in the Bismarckian Reich the apotheosis of German history, Graetz, from the standpoint of recently won emancipation, looked back into darker areas of German Jewish existence.

One of the first biographers of Graetz, Philipp Bloch, reports an anecdote that mirrors Graetz’s passionate attitude toward Jewish history. Bloch tells of a meeting between the young Graetz and Zunz in the home of the Berlin rabbi Michael Sachs: “[Sachs] praised Graetz for having the intention of publishing a Jewish history. ‘Still another history of the Jews?’ Zunz asked pointedly. ‘Absolutely,’ Graetz tartly replied, ‘but this time a Jewish history.’”<sup>16</sup> Just as Treitschke wrote not a history of Germans but rather a German history, Graetz wanted to write a Jewish history.

The Treitschke debate shows something else clearly. During the second half of the nineteenth century as well, writing Jewish history still entailed the danger, at least for Jewish authors, of being sidelined academically. When anti-Jewish accounts were corrected and Christian authors were

blamed for their accusations, there necessarily emerged a new picture of a positively delineated Jewish community in a hostile environment, and some people found this picture offensive. This thesis is confirmed by the fact that many Jewish colleagues also turned against Graetz in the debate with Treitschke and rejected his picture of Jewish history as too provocative for an audience accustomed to anti-Jewish images. The philosopher Hermann Cohen found in Graetz's work a "frightful perversity of emotional judgments," and the national-liberal politician Ludwig Bamberger complained that some passages sounded "as if a Stöcker of the synagogue had written them."<sup>17</sup> Thus Graetz, the best-known representative of Jewish historiography, was not made a member of the Historical Committee of the German-Israelite Community Association (*Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund*), which was founded in 1885 and existed only seven years. The reason for this exclusion was above all the resistance of more assimilated Jewish colleagues<sup>18</sup>

How much mere association with Graetz sufficed to make one a target of antisemites is shown by the example of his student Moritz Güdemann, who worked as a rabbi in Vienna. When Güdemann (along with Graetz) was harshly attacked by the German Jewish scholar Ludwig Geiger, the son of the reformer Abraham Geiger, because he allegedly represented the Jews as morally more elevated than Christians, Güdemann replied to a broader public: "You will also admit that by associating me with Graetz on this occasion, Geiger can rouse all the antisemitic periodicals in Germany and Austria against me, and he himself is certainly quite aware of this."<sup>19</sup>

Although Graetz received some recognition from the non-Jewish side, including his nomination as an honorary member of the Spanish Royal Academy of History in Madrid, like all representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* he was not accepted as a colleague by other historians. His appointment as an extraordinary honorary professor at the University of Breslau was in the Faculty of Languages, within the department of "Oriental literature and philosophy." He was not allowed to give lectures on history.<sup>20</sup>

### The Battle against Reform and Assimilation

Like many of his colleagues, Graetz fought on two fronts at the same time. In confronting the non-Jewish world, he was not lacking in clear judgments regarding enemies of the Jews in all periods, but among his fellow Jews he conducted a passionate battle against the Reform movement, which he perceived as a phenomenon of Judaism's growing weakness.

In his dissertation on Gnosticism and Judaism, written in 1845, he had not hesitated to take sides and use history to draw conclusions about the present. In his foreword, which he dedicated to the founder of Neo-Orthodoxy, Rabbi Hirsch, he left no doubt that this work was at the same time conceived as a polemic against “modern pantheism.” What Gnosticism intended in antiquity, Graetz maintained, was also the intention of nineteenth-century pantheism—namely, to challenge and destroy rabbinical Judaism based on the Talmud: “In this respect this epoch offers an unmistakable analogy with our own time; we have only to substitute for Gnostic dualism modern pantheism, with its direct or indirect emanations, to which Judaism is supposed to be either sophistically adapted or apostatically subordinated; then we see in the Gnostic and anti-Gnostic movements within Judaism ... a faithful mirror image of the present.”<sup>21</sup>

If we ask what the Gnostic and anti-Gnostic movements are supposed to reflect, the answer is not too hard to find. For Graetz, the Jewish Reform movement was the mirror image of Gnosticism, and its leading representative, Geiger, was a representative of modern pantheism. The connection between Graetz’s role in the ideological-religious controversy within German Judaism and its view of history becomes clear when we examine his early publications in greater detail. Thus in the periodical *Orient* (January 1844), he reports on the then raging rabbinical controversy between the Orthodox rabbi Salomon Tiktin and the Liberal Geiger, in which he explicitly attacked the latter.<sup>22</sup> And his first scholarly publication a few months later (December 1844) was an extremely critical review of Geiger’s manual and reader on the language of the Mishna, in which the still completely unknown Graetz accused the already-famous scholar and rabbi Geiger of adopting a “wrong standpoint” and “unscholarliness in every line.”<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, Geiger thereupon mobilized his supporters, who launched numerous attacks on Graetz. Against this background both the content and argumentation in Graetz’s dissertation become clearer.<sup>24</sup>

Graetz never used the expression “heretic” in speaking about ancient Gnosticism or Geiger and the modern Reform movement. But he left no doubt that these groups infected with the Gnostic intellectual heritage were ultimately lost for Judaism.<sup>25</sup> When we attempt to read Graetz’s dissertation as a religious polemic, we must keep in mind that the various trends within Judaism in the mid-nineteenth century were still in their early stages. Graetz had been in close contact with their leading representatives. He had once been Hirsch’s tenant in Oldenburg, he had known Geiger as a young rabbi in Breslau, and a few years later was appointed

to a professorship in a Jewish theological seminary that was led by the founder of a Conservative middle path, Frankel.

If Geiger and the Reform movement were the mirror image of the Gnostics that Graetz despised, their opponents, like the ancient hero Rabbi Akiba, had to face the heretics while using the latter's own language. This was the difficult task of modern Orthodoxy, with which the young Graetz still identified himself at that time. Just as his model, Samson Raphael Hirsch, waged the battle against the modern Reform movement in German and with the means of Western culture, so his student Graetz also thought and wrote in the scholarly language of the time, while he clung to traditional Judaism. The dissertation gave him, as he openly admitted, an opportunity to engage in this battle.

All his life, Graetz continued to reject the Reform movement. That did not keep him from publishing most of the volumes of his *History of the Jews* with the Institute for the Promotion of Jewish Literature (Institut für die Förderung jüdischer Literatur), a kind of book guild whose leader was the publicist Ludwig Philippson. Philippson adhered to Reform Judaism and constantly showered Graetz with enthusiastic comments. This changed, however, with the eleventh and last volume of Graetz's *History of the Jews*. Here Graetz drew on Heine to describe Mendelssohn's student David Friedländer, whom the Reform movement celebrated as its founder, as a "foot-corn surgeon" who instead of initiating true changes had undertaken only superficial reforms in Judaism.<sup>26</sup> With this and similar attacks, the volume could no longer be published by the institute, and the latter's intellectual leader, Philippson, distanced himself from Graetz.<sup>27</sup>

Graetz's reception in American Judaism, which was strongly influenced by the European Reform movement, suffered through his clear position in the internal Jewish controversy, even though his work was on the whole positively reviewed. Thus, the *American Israelite* noted in 1889 that Graetz's explanations were "defective in numerous instances." It praised a critical study, *Graetz's Geschichtsbauerei* (Graetz's History-Building, 1881), by the later rabbi of Little Rock, Emanuel Schreiber, and even James Gutheim, who had been the first English translator of one of the volumes of Graetz's great history, felt obliged to lament "that the learned author, who, throughout eight volumes sustained the reputation of an impartial historian, has, in the recently published eleventh volume, descended from his exalted standpoint by passing judgment ... in a spirit of bitter partisanship."<sup>28</sup> The first comprehensive modern encyclopedia of Judaism, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* that appeared in the United States between 1901 and 1905, reprimanded Graetz for his partiality. In an oth-

erwise positive and respectful article, we read that “his passionate temper often carried him away, and because of this the eleventh volume is certainly marred. Graetz does not seem to possess the fairness necessary for a historian”—an unusually harsh judgment for an encyclopedia.<sup>29</sup>

### Only a History of Suffering and Learning?

There is also a considerable difference between Graetz and the adherents of Reform in their fundamental assessment of Jewish history. Unlike Wolf and Jost, Graetz did not want to reduce Jewish historiography to the interpretation of a religious idea. He accused his predecessors of apologetics when he reproached Jost for misusing Jewish history for present purposes, in order to “show it in a better light. He really wanted to use it to prove that Jews have always been peaceful citizens and faithful subjects.” According to Graetz, Jost “has given the undeniably heroic Jewish history a dry and philistine character and robbed it of the luster that it had even in the eyes of unprejudiced Christian observers. He has ripped four thousand years of heroic drama to mere shreds. Slavishly dependent on Basnage’s work, he has broken it down into a history of suffering and learning [*Leidens- und Gelehrten-geschichte*], into a history of the Jews in the Orient, and into still smaller, incoherent fragments.”<sup>30</sup>

For Graetz, the history of Judaism could be truly understood only through its bearers, the Jewish people. In his outline of a philosophy of history, *A Construction of Jewish History*, written in 1846, shortly after his dissertation, Graetz expressed for the first time his fundamental opposition to the then dominant view of Jewish history. In the introduction to the fifth volume of his *History of the Jews*, he stated plainly that post-Talmudic Jewish history “still [had] a national character.” Together, the national and religious elements constituted—like body and soul—Judaism as a whole: “On the one hand there is the apparently immortal Jewish people, as the body, and on the other the no less permanent-seeming doctrine of Judaism, as the soul.”<sup>31</sup>

It was no accident that Graetz published first volume four of his eleven-volume *History of the Jews*, which is concerned with the Talmudic period. Continuing the polemic against the Reform movement he had pursued in his dissertation, Graetz defended the Talmud and rabbinical literature against its critics both inside and outside Judaism in the nineteenth century. The Talmud was one of the main targets of the early Jewish reformers’ attacks, as we have already seen in the cases of such different pioneers of Reform as Beer and Geiger. Graetz considered the historian’s mission not only to defend the Talmud against antisemitic slanders and internal

Jewish criticism but also to emphasize its crucial role in understanding early Christianity. Thus in 1865, in the foreword to the second edition of the fourth volume, he wrote, alluding to much-discussed biographies of Jesus by Ernest Renan and David Friedrich Strauss: "Let us hope that the time will soon come in which someone who does not know the Jewish historical and Aggadic literature [the nonlegal parts of Talmudic literature] of the first and second centuries, and who does not know that the gospels, the apostolic letters, and the polemics and apologetics of the apostolic Fathers have without exception an Aggadic character and shape, will, no matter how talented he may be, no more tackle the early history of Christianity than, for example, a historian with only a superficial knowledge of Athenian life and the philosophical and political trends in Athens would undertake to write biographies of Socrates and the Socratics."<sup>32</sup> More than two decades later, in the foreword to the third edition of volume 3 (1877), he was able to note with some satisfaction that in the meantime, a series of historians "were led to consider the rather obvious fact ... that Christianity did not enter world history as the *logos* made flesh, complete and without ancestors, but rather as a product of deeper movements in Jewish history at this time, and that it was marked by the period's strengths and weaknesses."<sup>33</sup>

Against his Jewish critics, Graetz emphasized the intellectual achievement of rabbinical literature: "It represents the core of Jewish history, which the history of suffering has shrouded in bitterness. In this enormous literature the whole people has deposited its thought and its innermost essence."<sup>34</sup> Thus for him, the period when the Talmud originated is the key for understanding the whole of Jewish history: "In the history of a people there is a particularly noted classical period, which always attracts researchers' attention.... In Jewish history, in addition to the prophetic period, the Talmudic period is classic." The figures that developed in it "are still considered prototypes" for succeeding periods down to Graetz's own.<sup>35</sup> In this connection it is not without importance that in dealing with the Talmud, Graetz appeals much more strongly to the pioneering works of traditional maskilim like Rapoport, Luzzatto, and Frankel than to his colleagues in Jewish scholarship such as Jost or Zunz.<sup>36</sup>

In the introduction to the "Third Period of Jewish History" (70–1780 CE) published in the fourth volume, the main lines of Graetz's historiography take on definite contours. In these seventeen centuries empires and peoples rise and fall, "but the Jews remain the same." Whereas the rest of the world experienced a continual up and down between "barbarism and dark ignorance," on the one hand, and the "luminous sphere of a higher

culture,” on the other, the “intellectual content of Judaism [remained] the same.” Not only did Jewish history span the whole period of modern human civilization, it also extended over “the whole of the inhabited Earth, it penetrated into the snowy regions of the North and into the sunny climes of the South, it sailed across all seas, it settled in the most remote corners of the globe.”<sup>37</sup>

With this historiographical counterpart to the literary theme of the Eternal Jew, Graetz constructed not only a kind of “special path” for Jewish history within human history as a whole but also explained it by its peculiar prehistory:

During their eighteen hundred years in the desert, the Jewish people took with them the Ark of the Covenant, which put an ideal striving in their hearts, and even transfigured the stain on their clothes with an apostolic splendor. The Jew, driven over the whole earth but respected and free as a bird, took a sublime, noble pride in being the bearer and sufferer for a doctrine in which eternity is mirrored, in which people gradually developed a knowledge of God and cultured behavior, and from which the salvation and redemption of the world is to proceed. The lofty consciousness of its glorious apostolic office sustained the sufferers, indeed marked suffering itself as part of its lofty mission. Such a people, which considered its present nothing and its future everything, lived, as it were, on hope, and is in fact eternal because of hope.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that Graetz charged Jost with reducing Jewish history to one of intellect and suffering did not keep him from dividing Jewish life in the diaspora into a history of suffering when it comes to its external relations and an intellectual history when discussing its internal development:

This is the eighteen-hundred-year-long period of the dissemination of unprecedented suffering, of continual martyrdom, unique in world history, but also of intellectual liveliness, restless thinking, and indefatigable research.<sup>39</sup> If one wanted to outline a clear, accurate picture of this period, one could only represent it as a diptych. On one side the enslaved Judah, with his walking stick in his hand and his pilgrim’s sack on his back, his gloomy face looking up at the heavens, surrounded by dungeon walls, the instruments of martyrdom, and the glowing branding iron; on the other side, the same figure with the seriousness of the thinker marked on his well-lighted forehead, with the expression of the researcher on his transfigured

visage, around him a study full of books in all human languages and covering all the branches of divine and human knowledge. — The external history of this period is a history of suffering such as no other people has undergone in this intensified degree, in this vast extent, while the inner history is a comprehensive literary history of the discovery of God, which however absorbs all the channels flowing from the sciences and mixes and merges with them, as is once again only characteristic of the one people. Investigating and moving about, thinking and enduring, learning and suffering fill the long stretch of this period.<sup>40</sup>

Graetz has often been characterized by a single phrase: that Jewish history is first of all a “history of suffering and learning.”<sup>41</sup> This is just as correct and false as when Ranke is reduced to his famous formula to the effect that one must describe history “as it really was.” Naturally there is a grain of truth in these formulas, but they are hardly adequate to the complexity of such wide-ranging works as those of Graetz and Ranke.

The conception of the external course of Jewish history as being first of all a history of suffering is firmly anchored in many premodern genres of memorial books, commemorations of martyrs, and memorial ceremonies in the Jewish tradition, and passed into the first products of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. “If there is an ascending scale of suffering, Israel has reached its highest degree. If the duration of afflictions and the patience with which they are borne ennobles, the Jews may vie with the aristocracy of any land. If a literature which owns a few classical tragedies is deemed rich, what place should be assigned to a tragedy which extends over fifteen centuries in which the poets and actors were also the heroes?”<sup>42</sup> In 1820, Löwisohn had already adopted the characterization of Jewish history as a history of suffering and learning when he wrote, “So—the centuries faded away, replacing each other eighteen times since Judah’s fall, bringing sufferings, sometimes harsher, sometimes milder, down on Israel’s head. Yet during all these centuries a powerful intellectual activity constantly took place; however, its unsurpassed power was directed toward an object that an unfortunate people always had in mind, that is, religion.”<sup>43</sup>

Löwisohn’s colleague Jost added that “just as the people of the Israelites were scattered and subjected, and were appreciated by a few people with unprejudiced minds, so is their history oppressed as a slave, and seldom finds a friend or loving care. However, is there a history even of slaves? What joyful images, one asks, can the fate of a servant still provide? Moreover, what does the diversity of his life consist of, other than



the change in his masters?"<sup>44</sup> Thus, Graetz did not invent the concept of a history of suffering, and as we have seen, in some places he even criticized his predecessors for reducing the historical account of the Jews to this aspect.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, he ultimately integrated this viewpoint into his work and—in the second edition of his *History*—further accentuated it as a “slave figure with the pride of a thinker.”<sup>46</sup> As Marcus Pyka has shown, for Graetz suffering meant less a painful humiliation than “a proud identification with a greatness that could survive and be maintained in the face of all kinds of hostility.”<sup>47</sup>

Graetz planned later revisions for such a view. Thus in the introduction to the fifth volume of his *History*, we read that Jewish history is “far from being a mere history of literature or scholars.” Instead, it could be said “that it is primarily a cultural history that is embodied not in individual superior minds, but rather in a whole people.”<sup>48</sup> In this respect, Graetz may have developed a more comprehensive and active conception of Jewish history than some of his prominent contemporaries, of whom the director of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary, Frankel, was representative when he wrote, “The events the Jews have experienced have seldom been recorded by their own hands, and then only here and there on individual pages: outwardly, the Jew had no history, world events could only affect him painfully, he did not intervene in them. But inwardly as well there was no history of his own, nothing changing and passing away, that sank into the past; his innermost life was religion, it was an absorption into the divine.”<sup>49</sup>

Graetz’s historical writing was still very different from the more nationalist historiography of his successors; he concentrated on intellectual and cultural developments, but in contrast to Jost he acquired a sense for the larger context of intellectual history. Thus, Graetz stood between the representatives of historiography of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* who saw postbiblical Jewish history as a history of religious ideas, and the national viewpoint, which was to develop toward the end of the nineteenth century, especially in eastern Europe.

### The Debate with Christianity and Germanness

As a German Jewish historian in the second half of the nineteenth century, Graetz faced a dilemma that should not be underestimated. On the one hand, he felt challenged by a Reform-oriented *Wissenschaft des Judentums* that was prepared to reduce the Jewish past to a purely religious history in order to advance the cause of future emancipation. On the

other hand, he could not participate in an increasingly nationalistic and already partly racist German historical scholarship that provided at best a niche for Jews and Judaism. Thus Graetz's work can be understood only in the context of its confrontation with the dominant trends within contemporary *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as well as German historiography. It should not be reduced to either an anti-Reformist act of liberation or a proto-Zionist plea.<sup>50</sup>

Graetz shared Wolf's previously mentioned notion that "scholarly knowledge of Judaism must decide regarding the Jews' worthiness or unworthiness, their ability or inability, to have the same respect and rights as other citizens." If the critical methods of scholarship are applied to the history of the Jews, then it will be possible to appreciate their great cultural achievements, and people will no longer dare "to treat the Israelite people scornfully as a degenerate Semitic race," dismiss its history as a "Jewish history," or smile condescendingly at the doctrine of this people as the "religion of a horde."<sup>51</sup>

Graetz begins his biblical history not in a scholarly critical style but rather as a fairy tale: "It was on a spring day that some pastoral tribes passed across the Jordan into a strip of land which can only be regarded as an extended coastline of the Mediterranean. This was the land of Canaan, subsequently called Palestine. The crossing of the Jordan and the entry into this territory were destined to become of the utmost importance to mankind."<sup>52</sup> The history of the patriarchs is here represented as historical truth; Graetz relies on the Bible as almost his only source, and subjects it to little critical analysis. He does this even though Protestant biblical criticism had already destroyed the foundations of belief in tradition.

Graetz's view of Christianity was more critical. He assessed the early Christians who were still embodied in Jewish traditions and Jewish law rather positively. However, he also situated the origin of Christianity in the Jewish messianic movements in a way that a Christian reader might find provocative. Thus in connection with Jesus, he spoke of the appearance of a series of "enthusiasts" (*schwärmerischer Männer*) who ultimately turned out to be pseudomessiahs.<sup>53</sup> He reproached research for not having always applied purely scholarly standards in assessing the person of Jesus and the emergence of Christianity. "In describing original Christianity, the historian must adopt only the historical, that is, the critical standpoint.... But the critical school still has not undertaken the task of distinguishing what is authentic in the life of Jesus from what is

mythical and tendentious. It is afraid of being disillusioned.” The reason for this was, Graetz maintained, obvious: “this would, of course, reduce what is historically credible in the gospels to a minimum.”<sup>54</sup>

In opposition to the distorting perspective of popular descriptions of Jesus, Graetz repeatedly emphasized what was entirely normal in the life of the religion’s founder. The Jesus he describes is a man and a Jew in the same sense that Liebermann’s painted Jesus (discussed above) was. Graetz thought that Nazareth, Jesus’s birthplace (for Graetz, the idea that he was born in Bethlehem is based only on legend), “offered no particular attraction; it was a small mountain-town, not more fertile than the other parts of Galilee, and bearing no comparison to the richly-watered Shechem.” Whereas in the nineteenth century Renan thought that Nazareth might be the only place in Palestine “where the soul felt itself somewhat relieved of its burden,” after visiting Palestine Graetz wrote, “I and other tourists found the narrow streets of Nazareth full of refuse.” Jesus, he continued, could not have been as erudite as claimed, because at that period Galilee was anything but an intellectual center. Any comparison with the Pharisee legal scholars, who were at that time laying the foundations for the emerging rabbinical Judaism, must be unfavorable to Jesus: “On account of his Galilaean origin, Jesus could not have stood high in that knowledge of the Law which, through the schools of Shammai and Hillel, had become prevalent in Judea. His small stock of learning and his corrupt half-Aramaic language pointed unmistakably to his birthplace in Galilee.”<sup>55</sup>

Graetz showed much respect for Jesus’s social and ethical teachings, and as such joined in the line of Jesus interpretation that Geiger had begun and that sought to reclaim the Jewish Jesus with all his positive sides as part of a certain trend within Judaism at the time of the Second Temple. Thus, Graetz firmly rejected radical anti-Christian conceptions. In his view, Jesus had no intention of founding a new religion: “Jesus in no way shook the foundations of existing Judaism, he hadn’t even thought of becoming an improver of Jewish doctrine or founding anything new at all.” According to Graetz, Jesus did not intend to move beyond the laws of Judaism, nor did he want to make his messianic character known outside the Jewish community: “It is certain that he was thinking only of Israel, which he believed he could deliver from sins as well as from the Romans’ heavy yoke.”<sup>56</sup> Graetz explained Jesus’s crucifixion as a misunderstanding; the Jewish law court had seen a blasphemy in his declaration that he was the son of God; in response to the accusation that the Jews were guilty of killing Jesus, Graetz emphasized that Pontius Pilate

was chiefly responsible for this; and he considered the resurrection to be a legend, like the theory of Jesus's divinity, which might have developed only later.

He regarded the increasing dominance of Christians of Gentile background as a disaster that led Christianity down "false and pernicious paths."<sup>57</sup> Here, the Jewish historian does not hesitate to scold: "The farther Christianity moved from its origin, the more it forgot or made itself forget not only where it had come from, but also from whom it had taken the largest part of its doctrines that won people's hearts. The first step in the Christians' estrangement from their original source gradually led them to a fanatical hatred of Jews."<sup>58</sup> In this connection Graetz was fond of the theme of the ungrateful daughter: "The Jewish religion, which brought [Christianity] into the world, could take no maternal joy in it, because its daughter soon turned against her creator and pursued paths that [the Jewish religion] could not follow."<sup>59</sup>

Graetz irritated his Christian colleagues not only by his blunt criticism of the later development of Christianity but also by repeatedly emphasizing the Jewish origins of the new religion. Baptism and communion, he reminded them, were just as Jewish in origin as the institutional structures of the Christian community. Both the reference to Christianity's Jewish sources and the reference to its forcible estrangement from its mother religion provoked violent reactions among historians and theologians. In a time long before the beginning of dialogue between Christians and Jews on the basis mutual respect, Graetz's self-confidently proposed theses necessarily met with a hostile reaction. Therefore, it is no wonder that in the first edition of Graetz's work, the publisher refused to include the chapter on Jesus, chiefly out of concern about censorship in Catholic Austria, and that the czar's censors later prevented its publication in Hebrew translation, even though it had in the meantime appeared in German.<sup>60</sup>

Nor did Graetz mince words when discussing the origin of the people to which he felt he belonged as much as he did to the Jewish people—namely, the Germans. In his first, anonymous newspaper article he had criticized the millennial celebration of the German Reich and mentioned doubts as to whether this was really a cause for celebration among Jews.<sup>61</sup> Years later, in his *History*, he wrote that the Germanic as well as the Slavic and Latin races first climbed the ladder of modern civilization through the influence of the Greeks and Judaism. Posterity has done justice to "Greek antiquity," as one does to those who are dead. The Greeks' achievements are even generally overrated, whereas the at least as impor-

tant cultural and historical contributions made by the Jews are disparaged or attributed to other peoples.<sup>62</sup> Marcus Brann, the editor of the second edition of the eleventh volume, which appeared posthumously, regarded this subject as so delicate that he—probably influenced by the debate with Treitschke—“altered in unobjectionable ways [Graetz’s] harsh judgments on Germanness and Germans, which were not infrequent in the first edition ... , on the basis of an authentic statement made by the deceased author.”<sup>63</sup>

### Rationalism and Mysticism

In the post-Talmudic period, Graetz’s sympathies clearly lie with rationalistic Judaism—and first of all with its heroes, Maimonides and Mendelssohn. On the other hand, for him, Jewish life in medieval central and eastern Europe along with the development of Jewish mysticism embody the dark side of Jewish history. The anti-Jewish persecutions in the Middle Ages constitute a new source for Graetz’s polemic against Christianity. Again and again he found himself forced to speak out against the role played by Christian nations with regard to the Jewish minority. The explicitness of his language is remarkable: he describes them as a “shameless rabble,” a “blood-thirsty people,” a “violent mob,” “degenerate Crusaders,” and so on. He even questions their part in the monotheistic world: “The opulent, immoral life led by the clergy, the crowd’s stultified, ignorant point of view, the actions of the Crusaders—all this recalls far more the idolaters scorned in the Holy Scripture than believers in a holy God.”<sup>64</sup> At least for Ashkenazi Jews, the Crusades introduced a period in which “all the peoples of Christian Europe outdid the savage Mongols in barbarism toward the Jews.”<sup>65</sup>

Graetz interpreted the different developments of the Jews in their respective countries of residence as a matter of historical nonsimultaneity: “In one country they were already servants of the royal chamber, while in another princes and cities still entrusted them with important offices; in one place they were reduced to serfs, in others they carried swords and fought for their independence.”<sup>66</sup>

Graetz’s predecessors already considered Spain as the prime example of a successful integration of the Jews into the world surrounding them. The president of the Association for the Culture and Scholarship of the Jews, Eduard Gans, had planned to write a memorandum to the Prussian ministry of the interior, in which he wanted to adduce the successful integration of the Jews in Spain as a model for the emancipation of German Jews.<sup>67</sup> German Jews built their synagogues in the Moorish style of

the “golden age.”<sup>68</sup> On the Iberian Peninsula, Jews had risen to become ministers and had at the same time held to their religion; they had philosophized in Arabic and commented on the Torah in Hebrew; they enjoyed economic success but did not leave their communities in the lurch. Hence the popular image of the golden age in Muslim Spain. “Like the Arabs, they cultivated all areas of intellectual activity and nevertheless maintained a steadfast fidelity to their religion; they observed every statute as the Bible and the Talmud prescribed, and never for a moment ceased to consider themselves as Jews. Spanish Jews occupied the highest state offices and yet adhered with warm love to Judaism; Jewish scholars immersed themselves in the depths of philosophy and were nevertheless familiar with the most secret branches of the Talmud; Jewish physicians, travelers, and merchants retained their love and zeal for Jewish scholarship,” wrote Bäck in his Jewish history.<sup>69</sup>

In the two centuries of Spanish Jewish cultural life, which reached both its high point and conclusion in the twelfth century with Maimonides, Jewish history, according to Graetz, had “worked its way up to a rich, solid cultural level that overcame the limitedness and one-sidedness of the naive religious view of life, brought purifying thought into religion, and gave artistic, graceful expression to the deepest thoughts.... The teaching of Sinai was illuminated by the light of philosophical knowledge, thereby produced a new, characteristic kind of knowledge, and revealed a new side of the human spirit.” The intellectual achievements of medieval Spanish Judaism not only introduced a new period in Jewish history but also preceded similar efforts in other cultural areas: “When Christianity took its first timid steps toward philosophical knowledge, there was already a complete Jewish philosophy, and before Romance and German poetry had outgrown their swaddling clothes, modern Hebrew poetry had already reached its mastery.”<sup>70</sup>

With Maimonides’s death and the end of what was for him the golden age in Muslim Spain, Graetz believed that a period of decline began that affected the Jews on the Iberian Peninsula as well: “This rich spiritual harvest time was followed by an ice-cold, terrible winter. Internal and external events cooperated to deprive Jewish history of its previous magnificence and to impose on its bearers, the Jewish people, a repulsive slave image. It fell from the heavenly heights into the deepest misery.” The often-moving description of the persecutions and expulsions of the late Middle Ages, which culminated in the end of Spanish and Portuguese Judaism, constitute the basis for the “lachrymose” version of Jewish history that Graetz is often accused of: “Collect all the sufferings that worldly

and spiritual despots have had their henchmen inflict on individuals and peoples; measure, if you can, the stream of tears that people have shed over a stunted existence, a crushed good fortune, or a disappointed hope; hold before your eyes the martyrs that an overexcited imagination has depicted in thousands and thousands of saint's legends to make the souls of the faithful shudder, and you have still not attained the whole extent of the misery that the martyred people endured over several centuries and faced with pleading patience." Graetz makes the goal of his description immediately clear: "These scenes of suffering must not be passed over in silence by history; instead, it must bring them into the foreground and make them visible, not in order to sink a thorn into the breast of the descendants of the persecuted victims and awaken the spirits of vengeance, but rather to arouse admiration for the great patience of this people and to prove that, like its ancient ancestor, it fought with gods and men and remained the victor."<sup>71</sup>

After the external distress came the internal decline. Here too Graetz is perfectly clear: "The prominent leaves and blooms of a splendid intellectual upswing gradually fell to the earth, allowing a raw, cracked stump to appear, wound about with ugly threads of spiritless but excessive piety, a confusing secret doctrine, and excrescences of all kinds.... External disgrace corresponded to internal decline."<sup>72</sup> The chief factor in the decline is what Graetz somewhat misleadingly calls "secret doctrine" (*Geheimlehre*): Jewish mysticism. Much has been written about his relationship to the kabbalah, and in view of his many denunciatory comments on it, there can be no doubt that he was no friend of the kabbalah.<sup>73</sup> This is not surprising, given that he believed that emancipation could be achieved only by presenting a rationalized Judaism. Everything that had laid stress on a not very rational or even mystical Judaism had in his view undermined efforts to win emancipation around the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, there was Graetz's conviction that Jewish mysticism ran counter to the true core of Judaism as canonized in the Bible and rabbinical literature.<sup>74</sup> For him, the kabbalah had its origins in the Essenes' secret doctrine, which was drawn from Egyptian sources, and thus far removed from Judaism, and ultimately constituted the foundation for Christianity. Nonetheless, it must be noted that he did not reject mysticism from the outset or condemn it wholesale in all its forms. Moreover, he wrote, especially in his long footnotes, some important contributions on the origins of Jewish mysticism and the authorship of one of its most important texts, the book of Zohar.<sup>75</sup> He identified the Spanish Kabbalist Moses de Leon as the author of the Zohar—a thesis that the young Scholem em-

phatically rejected, until on the basis of later discoveries, he finally had to agree with Graetz. It was above all intuition, and not so much scholarly proofs, that allowed Graetz so presciently to resolve a question that is of such importance to Jewish mysticism.

In the early modern period Graetz saw, in addition to the external repression, especially the decline of Jewish culture. In this he differs little from his predecessors and contemporaries, such as Jost and Geiger. The latter reproached German Jews of the early modern period for having “lost all refinement of taste.”<sup>76</sup> Graetz characterized the whole period under the title “The Jews’ Turn to Savagery.”

Graetz considered the eighteenth-century mystical movement of Hasidism that emerged in the area of the modern-day Ukraine to be the crudest form of this turn to savagery, which he juxtaposed with the Enlightenment that was beginning in the West: “It seems strange that at the same time that Mendelssohn declared that rational thinking was the essence of Judaism, a banner was set out that announced the crassest madness as the basic character of Judaism.... The new sect, a daughter of darkness, was born in the shadows and still today continues along dark ways.” Contrasting him with Mendelssohn, he described the founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer, called the Baal Shem Tov, as the dark man of his period: “The Carpathian foothills ... were his educator. There he learned what he would not have learned in the dark, cramped, dirty holes that people in Poland called schools.” According to Graetz, ben Eliezer was not capable of “discerning the boundary line between deception and self-deception.” His student and successor, Dov Ber of Mezeritch, receives hardly better treatment. Graetz accuses him of alcohol abuse and spying (“among his close friends were a few skillful informers worthy of serving in the secret police”), and spoke of a “Hasidic witches’ sabbath.” Summarizing, he condemned Hasidism and rejected it as un-Jewish, “a Catholicism within Judaism.” “The blame for all this falls on the wrong doctrine [*Afterlebre*] of the Kabbala, which, despite the unspeakable confusions that it has introduced from Sabbatai Zewi down to Frank, ... still clouds the heads of Polish Jews.” Graetz concludes that “among Polish Jews the intellectual organ had been so overexcited that the most tasteless thing meant more to them than the tasteful.”<sup>77</sup>

This characterization of Hasidism is found not only in contemporaries like Geiger, for whom the “degeneration” of Hasidism was “empty and crude,” but also remained typical of the generation following Graetz.<sup>78</sup> Even if not always so clearly expressed, the rejection was nonetheless unmistakable, as, for example, in the one-volume work of Bäck: “There



was no lack of other mad ideas, either. The Hasidim went so far astray that under some circumstances they tried to produce by means of alcohol the enthusiastic mood they wanted to enter into.... [Hasidism] even corresponded to an inner trait of the masses, their thoughtless mental weakness, which led them to suppose that the zaddik was the visible representative of God who thought and prayed for them and conveyed their prayers to God.”<sup>79</sup>

Both biographical and general social factors contributed to Graetz’s negative image of eastern European Judaism. No doubt his estrangement from his own heritage in a Prussian province still shaped by Poland played a role here. His establishment as a German Jewish historian was also the consequence of the clear separation from his roots. This must be seen in the larger context of a German Jewish bourgeoisie that in the nineteenth century was trying to distinguish itself from its predecessors, who often lived in the East, rigorously rejected the Yiddish language, and exchanged the “savage” way of belief in the East for the “civilized” religion of the West. In this respect Graetz is entirely a child of an age in which eastern Europe stood for “half-Asian,” as the writer Karl Emil Franzos put it.<sup>80</sup>

Only a few rays of sunshine, such as Amsterdam, the “Dutch Jerusalem,” let a little light into the darkness that Graetz described. This was, however, to change drastically with the appearance of the new Moses, the third great Moses. Mendelssohn was for Graetz “more or less the image of this people”: “Deformed in figure, awkward, stupid, stammering, not attractive, and outwardly repulsive. But in this deformed image of a people wove a thinking spirit that, misguided, haunted by fantasies, and scorned, did not respect itself. As soon as the truth in all its splendor was shown to this tribe, and that it was its truth, then it let its mad construction go its way and turned itself toward the light, and its spirit immediately began to transfigure its body, raise its stooped figure, the ugly traits were lost, and the nickname ‘Jew’ was almost turned into a honorific.”<sup>81</sup>

Here Graetz stands in the tradition of his predecessors. If there is a founding figure in Jewish historiography of the nineteenth century, then it was Mendelssohn, the philosopher from Dessau who was the first Jew to enjoy full recognition by his Christian contemporaries and who served his friend Gotthold Ephraim Lessing as a model for Nathan.<sup>82</sup> With his Hebrew biography of Mendelssohn published in 1788, the Enlightenment thinker Isaak Euchel laid the foundation for the glorification of the philosopher and Bible translator.<sup>83</sup> Nineteenth-century German Jewish historians essentially contributed to the further elaboration of the

first modern Jewish hero figure. With Mendelssohn's entry, so much light streamed into German Jewish history that the readers of these accounts were dazzled. Jost, for example, wrote that "under the rule of Frederick [the Great] Judaism wandered through a desert for about forty years, and the third Moses was called to take on the fading synagogue, and, guiding it out of the deepest darkness, to which it had become accustomed, enable it to turn its eyes toward the light." After recalling the exodus out of Egypt, Jost adopts a tone that allows us to conceive a new history of creation: "Then, unexpectedly, the dawn of a beautiful day was wrested from the thick darkness that had covered all of Judaism. The light broke into an inconspicuous hovel and quickly illumined everything around it and dissipated the gloomy clouds that lay over it. Moses Mendelssohn appeared and with him the Israelites were sent a third Moses, in order to raise up those who had been bent low and free slaves from bondage."<sup>84</sup>

Thus, the luminous figure of Mendelssohn showed his people the path toward integration into European society. This occurred within German Judaism, which thereby positioned itself at the center of Jewish history. For Graetz, as for his predecessors, German Jewish history was equivalent to modern Jewish experience itself, whereas at the same time the decline continued in eastern Europe.

### Translations and New Interpretations

Graetz was the most important and influential of the German Jewish historians. In his own lifetime, he became a symbol of Jewish history writing. In multiple reprints, editions, and translations, "the Graetz" became the guide to Jewish history. It may be that his passion, partisanship, and references to the present had much to do with his success. However, Graetz at the same time maintained an independence that makes it difficult for a specific camp to claim him as its own. His position in favor of Jewish tradition alienated the Reformers; Orthodox Jews, including his former mentor Hirsch, broke with him over his critical scholarly position with regard to the Holy Scriptures; the Zionists claimed him as one of their own, but despite his general support of Jewish settlement in Palestine, all his life Graetz had distanced himself from all political enterprises intended to create a Jewish state or detach Jews from Europe.<sup>85</sup> This independence often led Graetz to take positions that were not in complete accord with those of any of the political and religious actors, but it also made him appealing to a wide audience.

With Graetz, the "German century" of Jewish historiography came to an end. His most important successors in the twentieth century no longer

worked in Berlin and Breslau but rather in Odessa and New York, Vilna and Jerusalem, Warsaw and Oxford. This does not mean that *Wissenschaft des Judentums* disappeared in Germany. But it was soon overshadowed by the new centers of Jewish academic life in Eastern Europe, the United States, and Palestine.

Graetz continued to have an impact in all of these centers. For generations, “the Graetz” was one of the most popular bar mitzvah gifts. For the young Scholem, for example, who received on the occasion of his bar mitzvah both the popular edition of Graetz’s *History* and Mommsen’s *Roman History*, it was the starting point for his later scholarly career: “The profound impression which Graetz’s work had made upon me instilled in me the desire to learn Hebrew.”<sup>86</sup>

Graetz’s history was translated into numerous languages, including English, French, Polish, Russian, and Hungarian. In each translation, an attempt was made to adapt the book to the audience addressed. The American edition, which was abbreviated to five volumes, responded to its readers by expanding what was originally a footnote about American Judaism into a whole page; moreover, the prominent philanthropist and publicist Henrietta Szold edited the text, and the work appeared with a separate index volume. The edition issued by the Jewish Publication Society, which had been founded a short time before, was as full of apologetic thinking as its British counterpart, in which we read: “It is the heartfelt aspiration of the author that this historical work, in its English garb, may attain its object by putting an end to the hostile bearing against the Jewish race, so that it may no longer be begrudged the peculiar sphere whereto it has been predestined through the events and sorrows of thousands of years, and that it may be permitted to fulfil its appointed mission without molestation.”<sup>87</sup>

Even in eastern European countries, about which Graetz had little good to say, his work found its readers. His popularity in eastern Europe is shown, for example, by the fact that his history was given as a premium to new subscribers to Hebrew and Yiddish newspapers.<sup>88</sup> However, the Yiddish and Hebrew translations printed there were heavily reworked and in a certain sense were cleaned-up versions of the German originals.

Graetz himself rejected a Yiddish translation (which he called the “jargon”), but after his death several translations of the popular history appeared in Yiddish. It is quite curious to compare these editions, on whose title pages the famous name of Graetz appeared prominently (followed by formulations such as *nay iberdruckt, oysbegesert un farfolkomet*, or

“corrected and completed”), with the original. Often, Graetz’s original comments on the Yiddish language and on eastern European Jews simply disappeared. In some of these editions, Graetz’s assessment is even reversed into its opposite. For example, in these “translations” Hasidism—so much despised by Graetz—is praised as a movement of spiritual renewal. In one version, Hasidism’s founder, the Baal Shem Tov, whom Graetz dismissed as a deceiver, is presented as a “great man” who adhered to the strict moral standards he set and turned his attention to ordinary Jews.<sup>89</sup> In another edition, he is described as “a good-hearted and simple man,” as “sincere and very far from fraud and deliberate fooling,” which sounds more like a contradiction of Graetz than a translation of him. In the same edition, Hasidism is presented as a movement of the heart, and contrasted with the Enlightenment movement that Graetz praised—which, however, according to the Yiddish translation, “has taken the wrong path and led to baptism.”<sup>90</sup>

Graetz was still alive when a Hebrew translation of his work got under way. He insisted on examining it line by line, and intended to rewrite the sections on Jews in Russia and Poland, which were brief and mostly negatively connotated in the German edition. But he died before the publication of these volumes. Thus only the first volume of the most important Hebrew translation, by Shaul Pinchas Rabinovitch (SheFeR), appeared with Graetz’s express agreement. Most of the volumes contained long passages inserted by the translator or by other historians that took the edge off Graetz’s critical remarks about Polish Jews.<sup>91</sup>

Rabinovitch (1845–1910) was active in the Hebrew publication system, wrote for newspapers such as *Ha-magid* (*Preacher*) and *Ha-tsefira* (*Dawn*), and published the collective work *Knesset Yisrael* (*The Gathering of Israel*). He was one of the leading forces in the Zionist movement known as *Hovevey Zion* (Friends of Zion) in Russia, which took small groups of Jewish settlers to Palestine. His intention in translating Graetz was clear. Just as his task was “to awaken a true love for our people” by publishing a Hebrew periodical, the “Hebrew Graetz” was to help promote national pride. More than that: only in the holy language, Rabinovitch maintained, could Graetz’s history be shown to its best advantage.<sup>92</sup> This required more than merely cosmetic changes, as he indicated in a letter to Dubnow in which he explained that he had sought “to omit, to shorten, to weaken, and to change all matters that touch upon biblical criticism, scripture, and censurable matters.”<sup>93</sup> Whole chapters were added to some volumes. Rabinovitch refused to translate volume 11, which dealt with the most recent period, on the ground that it omitted

eastern European Judaism. Instead, part of Martin Philippon's history would be included as the final volume (bearing on its dust jacket the title *Jewish History by Dr. Zvi Graetz*) of Graetz's work.

It was this Graetz, in some places so altered as to be unrecognizable, that was to go through numerous editions in Hebrew and later be used as a textbook in Israeli schools. This explains why readers of the Hebrew editions often regarded Graetz as a Zionist. The truth is more complicated, however. His support for the construction of Palestine is as unquestionable as is his positive attitude toward the continuation of the Jewish nation. In addition, he reported enthusiastically on his journey to Palestine. But at the same time he felt himself to be a German who did not want to reverse the achievements of emancipation, rejected plans for the establishment of a Jewish state, and had no intention of leaving his homeland. "The fence around the Talmud makes every Jewish house in the world into a distinctly circumscribed Palestine," he had written in his *Die Konstruktion der juedischen Geschichte* (A Construction of Jewish History).<sup>94</sup> Until recently, however, Israeli historians tried to present Graetz as a proto-Zionist.<sup>95</sup> Yet it may be typical of Graetz's indecision regarding the question of a "return" to Palestine that in his fictional *Correspondence with an English Lady regarding Judaism and Semitism*, first published anonymously in 1883, he answered all his correspondent's questions, but left open the last one, in which she asked him about his attitude toward the construction of Palestine. Her comment, "So you haven't said anything indicating what you think about the Palestine question," is applicable to his general attitude with regard to this issue. The last sentence of the final letter, "You must later explain what you think about this," remained an unfulfilled demand.<sup>96</sup>

While Graetz was still alive, some German Jewish historians revised his history in major works that are now largely forgotten. Graetz's account had only seldom dealt with everyday life—a task that Abraham Berliner (1833–1915) and Moritz Gudemann (1835–1918) in particular were to undertake. In his *From the Inner Life of the German Jews in the Middle Ages*, Berliner examines a previously neglected side of Jewish life.<sup>97</sup> The subjects that he deals with include games and amusements as well as festivities, the dance hall, and the lower classes from itinerant merchants to female musicians. Drawing chiefly on Jewish sources, Berliner wrote a book to which he rightly gave the subtitle, *At the Same Time a Contribution to German Cultural History*. In it, he described, for instance, the "nut game" that Jewish girls played on Yom Kippur, Hanukkah riddles, the arrangement of Jewish living spaces, and German Jews' most popular

meals—none of which would have been rewarding objects of study for Graetz’s intellectual history approach.

Güdemann’s description in his three-volume work, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden* (History of the Culture and Education among Western Jews) is considerably more detailed. Whole chapters are devoted to “Superstition and Belief in Witches,” “Itinerant Scholars,” and “The Pleasures of the Table” among the Italian and French Jews of the Middle Ages. Güdemann supplemented his account with an additional volume on the Spanish Jews’ educational system under Islamic rule. Güdemann, who greatly respected his teacher, later made it clear that in his history he sought to fill in the sides of Jewish history that Graetz had neglected: “If there is anything to be reproached, or we might say more leniently, any omission in Graetz’s historical work ... then it is that Graetz gave little attention to cultural and social history.”<sup>98</sup> Like these two works, Georg Caro’s large-scale *Social and Economic History of the Jews in the Middle Ages and in Modernity* did not go beyond the late Middle Ages—because of its author’s untimely death. It offered the first comprehensive data on the economic situation of European Jews, which we will seek in vain in the work of Graetz and his contemporaries.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to these studies deepening and supplementing Graetz’s work, at the end of the nineteenth century there were also attempts at a new synthesis. For a wide readership, for whom not only the eleven volumes of Graetz’s history but also the three volumes of his popular history were too much, Samuel Bäck produced in 1878 *The History of the Jewish People and Its Literature, from the Babylonian Exile to the Present*, and justified it by explaining that “for five decades tireless effort has been made with the greatest success, but the greatest works of history that have so far appeared are addressed, because of their more scholarly character and the previous knowledge they assume, only to a limited readership, and are intended more to be studied than to be read.” In the prefatory remarks in his one-volume work, Bäck claimed to be objective: “[This book] seeks to provide a brief but clear and transparent, unbiased and objective historical account of the intellectual development of the Jewish people and its literature.”<sup>100</sup>

After the passionate debate between Graetz and Treitschke, the discussion about objectivity in Jewish historiography became a constant theme in Jewish journalism. The dominant view was that objectivity was necessary for every historian, but a certain standpoint must also be adopted precisely in relation to a Jewish history so full of persecutions. Thus, in a

lead article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* published in 1889 we read: “We think that the historian will not succeed in producing a true representation of his object if he does not know how to think his way into it with a certain love.... How could we demand of a Jewish historian that he pass over quite coolly the martyrdom that his tribe has suffered over thousands and thousands of years and not let us hear any note of deep complaint and bitter feeling! ... No, the kind of slippery objectivity that slides around the rocks and sharp edges, that does not dare to rip away the masks of evil-doers and to strike hard blows in defense of the oppressed, can be of no benefit to history in general, and least of all to Jewish history.”<sup>101</sup>

These lines could be read as a defense of Graetz, who had also been attacked by Jewish colleagues, by the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* even though it had long since broken with him. But we should rather see them in the larger context of the challenge to historical objectivity to which the second of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Unmodern Observations*, “History in the Service and Disservice of Life” (“Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben,” 1874), powerfully testifies. In this essay, Nietzsche made fun of “these naive historians” who claim that “‘objectivity’ means judging past opinions and accomplishments by the standard of current public opinions,” for “might there not be an illusion in even the loftiest interpretation of the word ‘objectivity’? ... It is superstitious to suppose that the image which things reveal to a man so attuned reproduces their empirical reality. Or are we to suppose that in these moments things actively sketch, paint, or photograph themselves, so to speak, upon a purely passive mind?”<sup>102</sup>

Graetz’s case clearly shows how little the historian can produce “a true image of his object,” or “photograph” it. For the reformers associated with Geiger, the picture drawn by Graetz was too conservative; for Orthodox Jews associated with Hirsch, Graetz attacked inviolable theological truths; for Treitschke and some other antisemites, Graetz was an anti-German eastern Jew, whereas Polish readers censured him as a German patriot with no understanding of eastern European Judaism. Most of them nonetheless read Graetz’s history in a cleaned-up Yiddish or Hebrew translation. Readers even received, in the final volume and the wrapper of Graetz’s history, the account provided by another historian, Martin Philippon.

The German edition of Graetz’s history ends in the mid-nineteenth century. Even if he continued his history somewhat further chronologically in the popular edition as well as in the English translation of 1891–92

(the first volume appeared shortly before his death), only a small part of the eleven-volume work dealt with the nineteenth century. The most detailed account of more recent times was provided at the beginning of the twentieth century by one of the most prominent representatives of German Judaism, Martin Philipppson. He was the son of the Liberal rabbi Ludwig Philipppson, the founder of the important German Jewish press organ, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, and himself became the representative of important organizations such as the German-Israelite Community Association (Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund), the Association of German Jews (Verband deutscher Juden), and the Society for the Promotion of Scholarship on Judaism (Gesellschaft für die Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums). In 1871 he received his doctorate from the University of Bonn's Faculty of History. As a Jew, he did not receive a professorship at a German university, so he accepted an appointment in Brussels, where he rose to become rector of the university. There, as a German who had volunteered for enlistment in the German army in 1870, he experienced anti-German agitation, was forced to resign his position, and returned to Germany. Between 1907 and 1911, his three-volume *Recent History of the Jewish People* was published as part of the ambitious "Outlines of the General Wissenschaft des Judentums" that was put out by the Society for the Promotion of Wissenschaft des Judentums.<sup>103</sup>

As the author of a multivolume Jewish history, Philipppson had a different background than Jost and Graetz. He did not belong to any Jewish theological institution and did not concentrate on Jewish history; instead, he had made his name with biographies of European rulers and a history of the Reformation. Only after these publications did Philipppson dare, a few years before his death in 1916, to deal with Jewish history. For him, the "dawn of freedom" began not with Mendelssohn but rather with the emancipation of the Jews in revolutionary France.<sup>104</sup> This shift of the beginning of the modern period from Germany to western Europe may have had something to do with Philipppson's own life abroad in Belgium. Although Germany is central to the first volume, the Jews of other western and central European countries are also discussed in detail. Even more important is that the whole third volume, consisting of more than three hundred pages, is devoted to the history of eastern European Jews. The latter thus receive far more attention than they did from earlier German Jewish historians. This may also be the main reason why his account was made the last volume of the complete edition of Graetz's history when it was published in Hebrew translation.



A further shift in emphasis is noticeable: the second volume, which also includes a discussion of the American and Oriental Jews, devotes almost 150 pages to the history of antisemitism in the second half of the nineteenth century and can thus be seen as one of the first consistent accounts of international antisemitic activities. How times had changed becomes clear when in 1909 Philippson wrote, "Antisemitism dominates directly and indirectly the whole history of the Jewish community in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.... For that reason an account of the origin and development of antisemitism must also be prominent in our history of the Jewish people from 1875 to the present."<sup>105</sup> Such observations would have been unthinkable in the ultimately optimistic accounts given by Jost and Graetz concerning their own lifetimes. Moreover, Philippson recognized that the rise of antisemitism in imperial Germany was closely related to the strengthening of Jewish life: "Thus Jewish consciousness was awakened everywhere. Antisemitism, which sought to destroy Judaism, had fruitful and beneficial effects on this strong, lively community."<sup>106</sup>

In the foreword to the first volume, Philippson, as the son of one of the most important representatives of Liberal Judaism, takes up the question of partisanship: "It goes without saying that in the battles that are necessarily connected with every newly pulsing life, [my] father took a particular partisan position and that it was at first shared by his son. Nonetheless, in this book I have sought to do justice to all trends, and I hope that I have succeeded in some measure."<sup>107</sup> It may be doubted whether this can be achieved by just any historian; Philippson, who ventured to write contemporary history, did not hide his convictions. He was rejected by Zionists as well as by the Orthodox, who regarded him as a "fanatic" and expressed the hope that God might spare them the publication of a third volume.<sup>108</sup> These reactions are not surprising, but showed that the author was a true son of his father. While respecting both the radical Reformers and modern Orthodoxy, Martin Philippson favored a mediating position that "treated the old with piety and was willing to forego it only insofar as it was incompatible with the demands of reason and modern sensibility."<sup>109</sup> And whom did he identify as the "true founder and leader of this moderate position in Germany"? None other than his father, honoring him with more than five pages. According to his son, Ludwig Philippson led German Judaism journalistically, organizationally, and intellectually into the modern period with "blazing enthusiasm and secure conviction."<sup>110</sup> For some critics, the son's pride went a little too far, despite the father's unquestionable achievements.<sup>111</sup>

Philippon's aversion was directed more toward the new Zionist movement than to radical Reform and Orthodoxy. Although he dutifully mentions the intentions and motives of the first Zionists, his assessment is unambiguous: "However, the objections to the efforts to establish a Jewish state in Palestine were no less important, indeed, conclusive." Who was supposed to construct such a state? "It may reasonably be doubted whether the masses of Jews coming from eastern Europe, given the lack of culture imposed on them by their circumstances, would be capable of constructing their own, properly ordered, cultivated state."<sup>112</sup> Here Philippon is still concerned to appear more the historian than the ideologue, but in other comments it becomes clear that he saw Zionists as "noble enthusiasts" who stumbled politically from one disappointment to another and whose congresses led to few concrete results. In his view, Zionism had certainly produced some positive elements for the revival of Judaism, but ultimately it was based "on a misunderstanding of the true, deepest character of Judaism" and sought to achieve the "impossible." In his conclusion, he assumes that Zionism will soon come to a worthy end: "Even if some day it disappears as a separate movement, its favorable effects will persist within broad areas of the Jewish community."<sup>113</sup>

Philippon's work was also made possible by many earlier studies that provided access to contemporary Jewish history. He drew on the rich fund of newly established periodicals and empirical studies that dealt with Jewish life in the recent past. In Germany, the "Historical Committee for the History of Jews in Germany" undertook this work and published important volumes of archival sources. In 1887 the *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden* was founded in Germany by Geiger, but it ceased publication only five years later and was not revived until the 1920s. Among the many activities of the Society for the Promotion of Wissenschaft des Judentums was the initiation of the *Germania Judaica* series, which was supposed to research, in alphabetical order, Jewish history in all the localities of the Reich between 1238 and 1815; the first part of volume 1 appeared in 1917.

In other European countries similar institutions were created; in Austria, the Historical Committee of the Viennese Israelite Religious Community; in Russia, the Historical-Ethnographical Committee of the Society for the Spread of Culture among Jews in Russia, and later the historical journal *Evreiskaia starina*; in Hungary, the source collection *Monumenta Hungariae Judaica* (volume 1 appeared in 1903); in France—where an early Judaic professional journal, the *Revue des Études juives* already existed—the *Gallia Judaica* series (1895); in England, toward the end

of the century, the *Jewish Quarterly Review* and the *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*; and even Holland and Denmark established their own organs for disseminating *Wissenschaft des Judentums* by means of historical accounts.

### External Opinions on Jewish History

For the most part, scholarship on Judaism remained a discipline practiced by Jews. When Jewish history played any role at all in the works of Christian historians, then it was usually not for its own sake but rather for a particular purpose, as can be seen, for example, in the works of German theologians and historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We can distinguish three main trends. First, Christian experts on Judaism sought to study and communicate Jewish history and culture in order to advance missionary efforts among the Jews. Furthermore, noting clearly recognizable parallels between the society of the Roman Empire and modern society, writers on ancient history saw the Jews as a corrupting element. Finally, concern with Jews in the economic history of the early modern period among historians, political economists, and sociologists played a significant role, in which the Jewish contribution to the emergence of modern capitalism was prominent.<sup>114</sup>

In the course of the nineteenth century and beyond, Christian missionary efforts among Jews—occasionally paired with the refutation of antisemitic accusations—were often the motive for Christian research on Jewish history and culture. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the two most important Protestant scholars concerned with postbiblical Judaism in the German-speaking world were Franz Delitzsch (1813–90) and Hermann Leberecht Strack (1848–1922).<sup>115</sup>

“Like two reconciled eagles, the old and the new society accompanied his bier; Judaism and Christianity mourned the death of a great man.” With these words David Kaufmann, a professor at the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary, eulogized the theologian Delitzsch. Kaufmann laid a symbolic “palm frond from Judah on his fresh grave” and expressed the hope “that his name will shine among the best Jewish names.”<sup>116</sup> The Jewish scholar mentioned not only Delitzsch’s outstanding achievements in the area of Hebrew literature, unparalleled since the Christian Hebraists of the Renaissance, Johann Reuchlin and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, but also emphasized his sharp retorts to antisemitic accusations.

Delitzsch was in fact among the greatest Hebraists of the nineteenth century. His early works, *On the History of Jewish Poetry* and *Scholarship, Art, and Judaism*, emphasized the creativity of Jewish life, not

only in pre-Christian times, but down into the modern age as well. His later work *The Life of Jewish Craftsmen in the Time of Jesus*, describes the hardworking Jews of Palestine as models for the German youth of his time and situates Jesus completely within a Jewish social context. The Jesus painted by Liebermann a few years later, like Graetz's integration of Jesus into the Jewish community, corresponded to the historical Jesus as he had been sketched by Delitzsch. In fact, Delitzsch's many Bible commentaries betray an erudition in the area of Hebrew language along with Jewish history and literature that was rare even among the most outstanding representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. At the same time, Delitzsch was one of the most resolute opponents of antisemitic prejudices. Thus in his *Robblings Talmudjude* he condemned the pseudo-Talmudic scholar August Rohling's attempt to discredit the Talmud, and in other writings spoke out against the accusation of ritual murder that had flared up again in various parts of Europe toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Delitzsch's interest in Judaism was not limited solely to his scholarly work and the battle against antisemitic slanders. In contrast to Kaufmann's obituary, other Jewish reactions emphasized the ambivalence of Delitzsch's relationship to Judaism: "I know two Franz Delitzsches—the missionary to the Jews and the scholar. The missionary to the Jews, who wants to use sweet words to deprive us of what is most holy to us, is a dark, joyless, unpleasant figure."<sup>117</sup>

As a promoter of the mission to the Jews in nineteenth-century Germany, Delitzsch was without peer. When he was twenty-five he was already doing missionary work at the Leipzig Fair, handing out tracts he had written himself, arranging to place Jewish children in Christian families, and visiting the ill.<sup>118</sup> A full professor of Protestant theology since 1846, in 1863 he began publishing the missionary journal *Saat auf Hoffnung* (Seeds of Hope), in 1871 he founded the Central Lutheran Association for the Mission to Israel, and in 1886 he established the Leipzig Institutum Judaicum, which was entirely devoted to missionary work. In his last work on Judaism, which appeared shortly before his death, Delitzsch emphasized his conception of the history of Judaism as the prehistory of Christianity.<sup>119</sup> He also called on Jews to convert: "Brothers from Israel, finally break through the spell of disbelief so that the cycle of mercy may be completed."<sup>120</sup> Should Israel persist in its "disbelief," "then there will be no dawn for them!"<sup>121</sup>

Delitzsch's Hebraism and his battle against antisemitism could never be combined with his missionary work without internal conflicts. He him-

self admitted that “anyone who loves Israel, but also loves Jesus, is driven into the most painful collision of one love with the other.”<sup>122</sup> Nonetheless, he never saw his love for Israel and his missionary work as opposites. Just as he thought that “all his Judaic studies ... served to prepare him for missionary work among the Jews,” he fought antisemitism out of the deepest conviction that Jews could not be brought to the baptismal font by violence but only by the “soft path.”<sup>123</sup> He regarded antisemitism as the greatest obstacle on the way toward Jewish baptism and therefore followed the motto he often repeated: “Speak in a friendly way with Jerusalem.” Delitzsch’s love for Israel was less a love for Jews than one for potential Christians, in accord with Luther’s principle: “Therefore we should not treat the Jews in such an unfriendly way, for there are still future Christians beneath them.”<sup>124</sup>

The Leipzig Institutum Judaicum founded by Delitzsch was followed by similar foundations at other German universities.<sup>125</sup> The most important of these institutes was created by Hermann L. Strack at the University of Berlin. A theologian and Orientalist, in his relationship to Judaism, Strack reminds us of Delitzsch in many ways. Like the latter, he campaigned against antisemitic slanders.<sup>126</sup> He also contributed, through his numerous publications, to the spread of knowledge about Jewish literature.<sup>127</sup> His outstanding *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, which appeared in numerous editions and translations, has remained down to the present day a standard work for those approaching the Talmud for the first time. Like Delitzsch, Strack did not share the view of many of his theological colleagues, who described the Jews of the time of the Second Temple as a rotten and morbid “late Jewry” who had lost all vitality after the appearance of Jesus.

Strack’s intention was to refute a negative image of the Jews, which had emerged not least through a distorted image of the Talmud. In contrast to Delitzsch, in his publications Strack for the most part did not indulge in Christian interpretations of Jewish sources. Nonetheless, it can also be said of him, as the *Jüdisches Lexikon* of 1927 already noted, that he “was probably ultimately guided in all his work for Judaism by the idea of the mission to the Jews.”<sup>128</sup> *Nathanael*, the periodical he directed, as well as the Institutum Judaicum that he led, overtly served the goal of the mission to the Jews.<sup>129</sup> Despite his methodical criticism of Delitzsch’s efforts in the mission to the Jews, Strack shared his basic appeal to the “Brothers from Israel” to break through the “spell of disbelief.”<sup>130</sup> When on the eve of the First World War he tried to transform his Institutum Judaicum Berolinense into the Seminar on Postbiblical Judaism, and to this end also

hire a Jewish teaching assistant, he made it clear in his application to the Faculty of Theology that the assistant had to be completely dependent on a Christian professor. Knowledge of postbiblical Judaism could not be communicated “by Jews, even with the best will and great erudition, in a way that completely satisfies the justifiable demands of Christians.”<sup>131</sup>

Although Strack did not abstain from sharp criticism of Jewish religious laws, Orthodox Jews preserved a respectful memory of him as a scholar of Judaism and defender against fanatical antisemitism.<sup>132</sup> Like Kaufmann in his eulogy for Delitzsch a generation earlier, the publisher of the Orthodox periodical *Jeschurun*, Joseph Wohlgemuth, counted Strack among the righteous of the Gentiles and thought that “Judaism had a duty to thank” him more than any other scholar of his generation.<sup>133</sup>

The role of German historians of antiquity was less ambivalent, since neither missionary zeal nor the refutation of antisemitic accusations was prominent in their confrontation with Judaism. Heinrich Leo (1799–1870), Johann Gustav Droysen, Theodor Mommsen, and Eduard Meyer were the most important German historians who assigned ancient Judaism an important, if not always positive, role. In his comprehensive analysis of these historians’ encounter with Jews and Judaism, Christhard Hoffman came to the conclusion that “ancient Judaism, as it developed after the Exile, [seemed] inferior”; and “still more: it represented precisely the evil from which people wanted to free themselves: Judaism did not develop any form of state-political culture, but instead made do with a lack of freedom and foreign domination; its intellectual life is marked by moral constraint and clerical tutelage; it does not constitute a closed national group, but rather lives in dispersal as a ‘state within the state’ of other peoples.” Since Herder and Hegel, there had arisen the idea of Judaism as a “paradigm of abortive development” culminating in “the primacy of the religious over the state-political.”<sup>134</sup>

In his *Lectures on the History of the Jewish State*, Leo, whose main area was research on the Middle Ages and the early modern period, concentrated chiefly on antiquity. His image of the Jews was emphatically negative: “Thus it seems almost to have been the intention of the world-spirit to use the Jewish people to show how a people ought not to live.” And the reader did not need to read between the lines to see that this was not simply a judgment about the past: “Just as in our time the Jew is distinguished especially by the fact that he always compares and considers the most diverse things only with respect to the money value common to them ... , so in ancient times he already sought out even in intellectual relationships and connections only an abstract generality.” Here Leo de-

picts the Jewish character, which in his view has remained the same from the biblical beginnings down to his own time: “In Jacob’s deception, in Joseph’s idle dreams, emerges already that acute egoism that is only too characteristic of Jews later in history.” At the same time, however, he emphasizes that the Jews were the founders of monotheism and the people from whom “the founder of our religion proceeded”; therefore, “the history of the Jewish people must in many respects appear as one of the most interesting.”<sup>135</sup>

This view of Jewish history, which oscillates between fascination and distrust, and involves a negative image of present-day Jews, was also characteristic of Jacob Burckhardt (1818–97). Like Treitschke, Burckhardt saw the development of the press and economy as threatened by the increasing influence of the Jews. His discussions of Jewish religion and culture are not lacking in respect and recognition, and yet he sees in them an element that is not only alien to the Christian West but also endangers it. Had the Arianism of the West Goths won out in its own era, Burckhardt thinks, “then in one or two centuries the Jews would have become the lords of the whole area and would have already at that time [*sic!*] had the Germans and the Romans working for them.” He connects the rise of Judaism “in the context of the domination of commercial values, industrialization, and the age of the organized masses.”<sup>136</sup>

In his *Roman History*, Theodor Mommsen, who can certainly not be accused of antisemitism, described Jews in a way that would be eagerly adopted by antisemites: “In the ancient world as well, Judaism was an effective ferment of cosmopolitanism and national decomposition.”<sup>137</sup> Mommsen, however, emphasized that he meant this in an absolutely positive way, and tried to clarify his position during the Berlin antisemitism controversy: “No doubt Jews are, as they once were in the Roman state, an element of national decomposition, and in Germany they are an element of the decomposition of tribes, and that is also the reason why in the German capital, where these tribes in fact mix more intensively than anywhere else, the Jews acquire a status for which people elsewhere envy them. Processes of decomposition are often necessary, but they are never pleasant, and are inevitably followed by a long series of evils.”<sup>138</sup> No matter how well-intended these comments were, with these words Mommsen too merged observations he made in his own day with those he found in historical sources and clearly was throwing fuel on the antisemitic fire. In the overheated atmosphere around 1879–80, German Jews were not keen on being associated with words like “decomposition” and “cosmopolitanism,” or the evils associated with them. Thus Treitschke was per-

haps not entirely wrong in writing, in a letter to Mommsen on December 15, 1880: “Now I’ve defended myself; and if it were only a matter of the Jewish question, I wouldn’t be very worried, because our views do not differ greatly in substance and we are really only arguing over their appropriateness.”<sup>139</sup>

Treitschke was one of the few historians who included some remarks on modern Judaism in their accounts. Not surprisingly, the comments were mostly negative. In his *German History in the Nineteenth Century*, he described Jews as a disintegrating element in traditional society, viewed Jewish journalists with suspicion, and gave free rein to his negative judgment on what he regarded as the Jewish aspect of Heine’s work. Here as well, a reader will find the present concerns of Treitschke intermingled with his historical writings. Only baptism, he argued, could give Jews full civil rights and social acceptance. But even then “this yeast of Judaism” would remain, and its representatives, “with their stinking caftans, their legalistic sidelocks,” and “their repulsively corrupted language,” would continue to force their way into the inner life of Prussia.<sup>140</sup>

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only a few non-Jewish authors wrote serious studies on medieval and modern history that gave special attention to the Jews. One of these was Otto Stobbe (1831–87), a specialist in Germanic law who was also recognized by Jewish historians. Stobbe was appointed to the Historical Committee of the German-Israelite Community Association—an honor not enjoyed by his colleague in Breslau, Graetz, with whom he was in close contact.<sup>141</sup> Stobbe was well aware that there was something exotic about doing research on Jewish history: “Works on the history of the Jews are so little known in non-Jewish circles that even scholars, as I have often had occasion to see, are only imperfectly informed about the history of this people in Germany.”<sup>142</sup>

In his book on Jewish history, however, Stobbe exaggerated the role of the Jews as the only merchants in the age of the Crusades and their importance as moneylenders in medieval society.<sup>143</sup> Like many others, Stobbe was chiefly interested in the economic role of the Jews in European history. In an influential study, Wilhelm Roscher (1817–94), a leading political economist, broadened Stobbe’s thesis that Jews were for centuries “the commercial guardians of modern peoples.”<sup>144</sup> Stobbe and Roscher falsely assumed that the Jews were the main supports of trade in the early Middle Ages. Later on, they maintained, the Jews had introduced interest on capital, currency exchange, and other economic innovations, and thus laid the foundations for a new, capitalistic economic system. In this connection Avraham Barkai has pointed out that in the



scholarly literature, Lombard or German merchants, such as the Fuggers, are generally described as “merchants and bankers,” whereas Jews are described as “profiteers” (*Wucherer*) and “hagglers” (*Schacherer*).<sup>145</sup> This one-sided representation of the Jews was also found in school textbooks. Although anti-Jewish violence and exclusions were condemned in these textbooks, an image often emerged that is found in an aggravated form in a textbook frequently reprinted as late as the Weimar Republic: “As a money man, the Jew ruled the world, because money already ruled the world at that time, and all the more because the simple people had very little cash money.”<sup>146</sup>

The theses that Roscher and Stobbe had formulated in what was still a careful and certainly not antisemitically intended way, were popularized more than a generation later by the sociologists Max Weber (1864–1920) and Werner Sombart (1863–1941). In his books *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (The Jews and Economic Life) and *Die Zukunft der Juden* (The Future of the Jews), Sombart adapted Roscher’s and Weber’s theses regarding Protestantism and the origin of capitalism to propose the highly controversial view that the Jews were responsible for the collapse of the medieval economic system as well as the emergence of capitalism. Using language that was commonplace in the dominant social discourse of the time, he described the Jews as a corrosive element in a traditional society.

Sombart depicted Jews as matter-of-fact people who conceived “others not as living beings, but only as legal subjects, citizens, or otherwise abstractly.” Hence the main interest of “the” Jew was the “interest in success.” The Jewish peculiarity could be summed up by the following generic terms: “intellectualism, teleologism, voluntarism (or ‘energism’), and mobilism.” To these must be added restlessness and an ability to adapt. “His goal-orientedness is naturally the driving force that makes the Jew pursue stubbornly and persistently his primary end: adaptation to any situation whenever he considers it advantageous for his purposes.” According to Sombart, all these alleged character traits point to a “striking parallelism between Judaism and capitalism.”<sup>147</sup> In the debate about Ferdinand Tönnies’s concepts of community and society, for Sombart the Jews symbolized, more than any other group, a deracinated society. In Sombart’s case as well, research on Jewish history was marked by a mixture of scholarly ambition and ideological orientation. Sombart remarks in his foreword that “the book is a strictly scholarly book.... However, scholarship seeks to convey objective knowledge, it seeks the truth, which is fundamentally always one.” But at the same time he emphasizes that

“this is a one-sided book; it seeks to be one-sided because in order to produce its revolutionary effect on people’s minds, it must be one-sided.”<sup>148</sup>

Liberal Jewish circles as well as many non-Jewish scholars rejected Sombart’s thesis that the Jews were not only the classic aliens but also produced alienation and anonymity wherever they were. On the other hand, Sombart’s thesis found approval among Zionists. It is significant that the later prime minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion translated part of Sombart’s work into Hebrew.<sup>149</sup> In any event, in his book *The Future of the Jews* Sombart had supported the project of creating a Jewish state, while in their own reflections the Zionists repeatedly emphasized the special economic role played by Jews. Sombart’s thesis corresponded to their demand for the “productivization” of Jewish state, which could only be achieved in a Jewish society. But Sombart’s theses in *The Jews and Economic Life* were also applauded by some non-Zionists. Thus in 1911 he became an associate member of the American Jewish Historical Society, and the painter Max Liebermann found his book particularly interesting “because it teaches me how an unbiased Christian thinks about Jews. And if you were not a philosemite, you would not have written your book—which the antisemites will bitterly hold against you.”<sup>150</sup>

Max Weber’s posthumously published essays on the sociology of religion in antiquity (1923) will be given only marginal attention here. In them, he assumed that a specific role for Jews had developed in business ethics early on. In their minority function as a *Pariahvolk*, after the Babylonian exile they had begun playing a shaping role in the economic life of peoples, and developed a “pariah capitalism” that included “all the forms of state and robber-baron capitalism detested by Puritanism, along with simple usury and trade.”<sup>151</sup> In a certain sense, Weber’s interpretation can also be read as a reply to Sombart, since Weber clearly rejected any connection between the Jewish religion and modern capitalism.

After the First World War, the view of Jewish history held by Christian researchers in Germany was to change, at least slightly. In the Weimar period the beginnings of open dialogue between Christians and Jews can be discerned. It is in this context that we should see, for instance, the discussions between Martin Buber (1878–1965) and leading Christian theologians held in the Jewish adult education school in Stuttgart,<sup>152</sup> the short-lived interdenominational periodical *Die Kreatur*, the initiation of the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible translation by the young Christian publisher Lambert Schneider, the writings of liberal Protestant theologians such as Emil Felden (*The Sin against the People*) and Eduard Lamparter (*Judaism in its Cultural and Religious History*), the (failed) project of a twelve-

volume Jewish history planned by the Leipzig publisher Peter Reinhold (who was also the German finance minister at the time),<sup>153</sup> and the decline of missionary activity in the Berlin Institutum Judaicum, which under its new director, Hugo Gressman, was chiefly involved in disseminating knowledge about Judaism.<sup>154</sup>

It would be an exaggeration to speak of a breakthrough. We must not forget that some of the initiators of this dialogue were convinced by their Jewish spouses to be more open toward Judaism. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that outside the Berlin Institutum Judaicum, missionary activity continued undiminished, while *Wissenschaft des Judentums* fought in vain for full recognition in German universities.<sup>155</sup> A lack of serious debate about Jewish history persisted among historians. Probably the most popular work of the time, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, was representative of the traditional view according to which Judaism had exhausted its historical role long before the beginning of the modern era. Spengler contended that "since Yehuda ben Halevi [he meant the eleventh-century Spanish Jewish poet Yehuda Halevi]," there had been no further historical development of Judaism.<sup>156</sup> Still later, in the first volume of his *Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee was to describe Judaism as a historical fossil of the universal Assyrian culture. Judaism was for him a relic of the vanished ancient Syrian culture and could not be classed with any modern high culture.<sup>157</sup>

Yosef Yerushalmi once remarked that research on Judaism in the academic context was recognized in only one European country—namely, "Spain, where a cadre of non-Jewish Hebraists, focused on the history and culture of Spanish Jewry, was already active in the twenties and thirties, culminating in the establishment in 1940 of the Instituto Arias Montano and its distinguished scholarly journal, *Sefarad*. Such a development, however, was unique to Spain and is explicable only within the Spanish context."<sup>158</sup> In addition, there were certainly individual non-Jewish academics in various countries who turned their attention to topics in Jewish history, but their accounts did not cover more than one period and their achievements did not have a broader institutional framework.

The renewal of Jewish historiography at the beginning of the twentieth century thus proceeded from another source: the Jewish historians of eastern Europe. According to the most important representative of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the early twentieth century, Ismar Elbogen, along with the geographic shift, a methodical change in historiography also developed after the First World War. As Elbogen conceded, this change was carried out not by a German Jewish but instead by a

Russian Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow: “The fifty years separating the appearance of the last volume of Graetz’s *History of the Jews* from the first volume of Dubnow’s *World History of the Jewish People* mark the journey from the ideological conception of Jewish history represented by Graetz to the sociological conception demanded by Dubnow.”<sup>159</sup> With the appearance of Dubnow, Jewish historiography received, after Graetz, its second great master narrator—this time from the perspective of eastern European Judaism.



Fig. 3.1. Maurycy Minkowski, *He Cast a Look and Went Mad*, 1910. Oil on canvas. Gift of Mrs. Rose Mintz. Photo by John Parnell. Photo credit: The Jewish Museum, New York/Art Resource, NY.

### 3. THE NATIONALIZATION OF JEWISH HISTORY

#### *The View from the East*

I build and rebuild the Temple of Historiography  
and pray in it in holy silence.

—Simon Dubnow, journal entry, October 4, 1916

JUST AS LIEBERMANN'S YOUNG JESUS struck observers as out of place in the synagogue, so the oil painting by the Polish artist Maurycy Minkowski (1881–1930), *He Cast a Look and Went Mad*, seems to recount the story of an outsider who is separating himself from the tradition of his ancestors. He is part of the group and yet does not belong to it. His expression is that of a doubter who is not able to separate himself from the Jewish community but who can no longer share its religious ideas because he has looked too deeply into the non-Jewish environment. He may be a maskil, one of those Jewish Enlightenment thinkers of eastern Europe who has decided to follow his own spiritual path. How long will this young man tarry among the praying men in the synagogue?

#### Dubnow: Diaspora Nationalism as a Historical Concept

Although the painting does not depict a specific person, it could well be a portrait of the young Simon Dubnow, who was born in the Belarusian town of Mstislavl in 1860—the same year that the first universal historian of Jewish history, Jost, died in Frankfurt am Main. Dubnow, who grew up in the traditional Jewish society and was a largely self-taught historian, rewrote Jewish history from the point of view of eastern European Judaism. His ten-volume world history is still considered the most readable general account of Jewish history. At the same time, it is an expression of his political battle for national autonomy for the Jews of eastern Europe.

While still a young man, Dubnow left the religious milieu of his childhood, and devoted himself to the study of Russian poetry, political theories, and historical thought. As he wrote in his autobiography, it was especially John Stuart Mill's writings that became his "*kitvey kodesh*," his holy scriptures: "Thus I was in possession of a new scientific religion."<sup>1</sup>

In 1884, when after a short stay in the city he had to leave Saint Petersburg again and returned to Mstislavl, he chose to live outside the Jewish quarter in order not to be too conspicuous when he did not observe the Sabbath. For a long time he did not even go to the synagogue on Yom Kippur, the highest holiday, and he ostentatiously went away on a trip on the day of his son's circumcision. His hero was Elisha ben Abuya, the "arch-heretic" who in the Talmud is usually called only Aher—the Other—and whom Graetz described in his dissertation as one of the negative prototypes of Judaism. In his first article, published when he was twenty, Dubnow dared to ask, "What would have happened if the Elishas had become our leaders?"<sup>2</sup> And almost half a century later, after the publication in German translation of the first volume of his *World History of the Jewish People* in 1925, he asked himself in a diary entry how his "heretical conception of history" would be received "in the land of traditional Jewish scholarship."<sup>3</sup>

Dubnow's secular autonomism and the view of history associated with it must be seen in the context of the radical transformation of Jewish society in Europe around the turn of the century. In 1897, the first Zionist Congress met under the leadership of Herzl, the socialist workers' movement of eastern Europe was formed with the Jewish Labor Bund in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland), and Dubnow published the first of his programmatic *Letters on Old and New Judaism*.<sup>4</sup> The transformation of western European Jews into citizens of Jewish faith introduced by the French Revolution about a century earlier was explicitly rejected in eastern Europe, where the Jews' future seemed imaginable only in terms of a collective—whether as a return to their own state in Palestine, as a Yiddish-speaking proletarian mass, or in the form of collective autonomy.

After stays in Vilna and Odessa, Dubnow lived in Saint Petersburg between 1906 and 1922, where he collaborated in the courses on Jewish studies founded by Baron Günzburg. His most productive period was the decade between 1923 and 1933, during which he was able to publish in his new home Berlin three of his most important works: the *Protocol Book of the Lithuanian Vaad from 1623 to 1761* (1925), with an introduction in Hebrew; the ten-volume *World History of the Jewish People* (1925–29), which was written in Russian but first published in German; and his Hebrew *History of Hasidism*.<sup>5</sup>

Dubnow was a wanderer not only between languages but also between worlds. He made a radical break with the traditional milieu of

his childhood. In 1883 he wrote, "I know of no word in Jewish history so terrible as rabbinism; for the Jews it has been a hundred times worse and more destructive than the Inquisition; the latter destroyed people physically, the former spiritually. The Inquisition was active at a specific time; rabbinism remains at work without cease."<sup>6</sup> Dubnow was later to abandon this radical antireligious position, but he remained a convinced secular Jew throughout his life and militated on behalf of a solution involving Jewish autonomy in eastern Europe. After his political ideas, which had always assumed that the Russian multiethnic empire would evolve peacefully into a democratic entity, had been proven untenable by the autocracy of the czarist regime, for a short time Dubnow pinned his hopes on the developments after February 1917, but they were again dashed by the October Revolution and Europe's nation-state orientation after 1918.<sup>7</sup>

Disappointed by the political development in the Soviet Union, Dubnow found himself forced to emigrate. At first it seemed that his ideas about autonomy might be realized in the Baltic states. The possibility of a professorship at the University of Kaunas in Lithuania offered an alternative to Berlin, the center of Russian emigration, a place where he could complete his work in peace. "Now the question arose as to where I should take up residence—in Kaunas or in Berlin? I was attracted to Kaunas by the promise of a professorship in Jewish history at the Lithuanian university, which had already been offered to me while I was still in Russia. On the other hand, Berlin was the only place where I could not only publish my main work in various languages but also put the final touches on the text in the last stages of the editing, because the richly-stocked libraries of the German capital would be available to me."<sup>8</sup> According to Dubnow, the decision was made for him when nationalistic professors in Kaunas opposed the establishment of a professorship in Jewish history. But he may himself have leaned toward Berlin because of economic problems in Lithuania and his disillusionment with regard to the realization of his plans for autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

The tranquillity he had hoped to find was denied him because of the difficult economic and political situation. On New Year's Day 1923, Dubnow wrote in his diary, "Gray dawn in an alien land. How differently I imagined this a year ago in the ruins of Petersburg, when the familiar had become alien to me and my own home had become a prison. I was hoping for a light, quiet twilight of my life spent in the tireless pursuit of my life's work." However, after an initial, exasperating search for



lodging, Dubnow did finally achieve the necessary peace: “Never before had I worked so intensively, and it had been a long time since I had felt a similar mental satisfaction.”<sup>10</sup> In Berlin, Dubnow belonged to a large and active group of Jewish intellectuals from Eastern Europe. Here, the fiftieth birthday of the Hebrew national poet Hayim Nahman Bialik was celebrated in the Philharmonic concert hall, Jewish publishing houses and newspapers operated, and in 1925, with Dubnow’s collaboration, the Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut (YIVO) was founded to research the history and present of Eastern European Jewry. Dubnow also participated actively in the life of his German-speaking environment. He was in contact with German Jewish historians, and in 1924, in cooperation with other immigrants, he founded the Jewish Research Association, which also involved meetings with German Jewish scholars. However, the association lasted only a year.<sup>11</sup> In 1926, Dubnow was a candidate—even if only a nominal one—on the electoral list of the Jewish People’s Party (Jüdische Volkspartei) for the representative assembly of the Jewish community in Berlin.<sup>12</sup> But he felt himself to be an outsider in the German *Golus* (exile). As the political polarization grew in the Weimar Republic, Dubnow’s feeling of alienation steadily increased. Thus after Paul von Hindenburg was elected president of the Reich in 1925, Dubnow noted in his diary, “The foreignness of Germany has become still more foreign for me.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite these thoughts regarding his chosen homeland, he could not make up his mind to take the decisive step chosen by many Eastern European Jews living temporarily in Germany, from Bialik to Ahad Ha’am to Shmuel Yosef Agnon: emigration to Palestine. He did write in his diary, shortly after his arrival in Berlin, that “a secretly nourished dream might be realized—spending the last years of my life in Eretz Israel. However, how many obstacles to the achievement of this goal remain to be cleared away!”<sup>14</sup> Yet he always talked about the peace and quiet for writing that were provided by his Grunewald apartment, and that would be lacking in Palestine. This was surely a reason for Dubnow, now in his sixties, to remain in Berlin. It seemed to him that only by staying there would he have a chance to complete his work. In addition he had found in his immediate neighborhood a competent translator, Aaron Steinberg, and one of the most appropriate publishers in Berlin. An ideological factor was probably also involved. Despite a certain sentimental attachment to the Land of Israel, in his diary entries he conveyed the impression that he simply belonged in the *Golus*. Whereas his friend Ahad Ha’am lived “in his own house in the beloved land, among his friends and relatives, in a

familiar environment,” though in the mental tension of Tel Aviv, Dubnow endured in Berlin “the pressure of the alien, of living abroad, without my own home, detached from my friends, without having lost the mental peace that was so important for my gigantic work.”<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the writers mentioned above, Dubnow was not a Zionist. Dubnow, who was born in the same year as Herzl, was not hostile to the Zionist idea but considered it an elitist dream and did not believe that it could resolve the urgent problems of the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe. In 1897 he refused to travel from Zurich to nearby Basel, where he could have attended the First Zionist Congress. He did share the Zionists’ nationalist conception of Jewish history and supported the revival of Palestine as a center of Jewish settlement. But his nationalism was connected with the diaspora. Even if his relationship to Zionism varied, throughout his life Dubnow opposed the Zionist refusal to recognize Jewish life in the diaspora. He did so not only as a historian but also as a politician.<sup>16</sup>

In the second of his letters on ancient and modern Judaism published in January 1898 in the Russian periodical *Voskhod*, he emphasized the Jews’ character “as an intellectual-historical nation within political nations,” and at the same time stressed the identification of European Jews with Europe: “Europe has been the homeland of a significant part of the Jewish people for two thousand years; in their land lay the bones of millions of our ancestors; as ancient Roman colonists we have experienced the growth of Christian civilization, the formation of Christian states and societies; here we have ourselves developed a rich intellectual culture that has not been without influence on our Christian neighbors. And after all that people want to regard us as foreigners, as intruders, and even some from our own midst join our enemies in this cry and preach a new exodus of the Jews out of Europe to the Near East!”<sup>17</sup>

As a politician, Dubnow shaped the development of “diaspora nationalism,” which aimed at a broad cultural autonomy of Jews in Eastern Europe, on the model of autonomism in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>18</sup> For this purpose he founded the not very successful *Yidishe Folkspartey* (Jewish People’s Party).<sup>19</sup> In contrast to most of his German Jewish predecessors, he regarded the religious and national—or as he called them, the individual and collective—elements in Jewish history as inseparable: “Since through its monotheistic way of thought the people of Israel became an independent unit within the world of ancient paganism and had to make every effort not to be absorbed into the foreign environment, its leaders had no choice but to make use of the power of religion to preserve the nation’s existence. Thus the individual and the na-

tional principles became so closely intertwined within Jewish doctrine that it was difficult to decide whether Judaism's self-preservation served the nation or the self-preservation of the nation was merely a means to Judaism's ends."<sup>20</sup>

For Dubnow the historian, Jewish nationalism represented the highest level of the national movement, since it had already moved beyond the stage of having its own territory. In other words, Jews are so self-evidently a nation that they no longer need to have their own area, their own state. According to Dubnow, Jews had passed through all the conventional phases of national development and now constituted a spiritual nation.<sup>21</sup> Reproaching his liberal opponents in Western Europe, he noted, "Those who think that Jews constitute not a nation but a religious community are committing a serious logical error."<sup>22</sup>

This radical thesis was reflected in Dubnow's conception of history, or perhaps—who can say?—was the result of his understanding of history.<sup>23</sup> In Dubnow's work, history itself becomes the true bearer of national consciousness, and the study of history becomes the most important way to communicate the national idea.<sup>24</sup> Dubnow expressed the close connection between history and national identity unequivocally in his speech given on the occasion of the founding of the Jewish Historical-Ethnographical Society in 1908: "I am speaking here about history not only as a scientific discipline but also as a vigorous factor of national culture. If we are truly to be called an 'eternal people,' we must clearly understand the eternal thread that connects our past, present, and future into a single unity." He leaves no doubt that the historical and ethnographic studies to be undertaken by the new society are directly connected with the task of raising the consciousness of a Jewish nation in the diaspora.<sup>25</sup>

Dubnow's activity in the field of history began with his plan to translate Graetz's *Popular History* into Russian. Although this enterprise was soon to be abandoned, an initial admiration for Graetz's work and an identification with his thought is discernible in Dubnow's early writings.<sup>26</sup> The student's great veneration for his master, whom he never met and with whom he probably did not correspond, is evident in a text written in 1892. "Only a man of genius possessed of the most diverse gifts could undertake" such a "grandiose historical monument." Dubnow used Graetz to support his own ideological position, claiming that Graetz was a "nationalist in the best sense."<sup>27</sup>

In his first great "essay in the philosophy of history," Dubnow still followed the general outline laid down by Graetz.<sup>28</sup> He echoes the great German Jewish historian when he writes that the Jews' life as a nation

is concentrated in the area of the mind: “‘Think and suffer,’ becomes the motto of the Jewish people, not simply because the power of conditions beyond Jews’ control force this motto on them, but mainly because it is deeply rooted in their cast of mind and natural inclinations.... The story of the people as teachers of religion—that is the content of the first half of Jewish history; the story of the people as thinkers, stoics, and sufferers—that is the content of the second half of this history.”<sup>29</sup>

Soon, however, he began to criticize German Jewish historiography that described the Jews as chiefly a religious denomination, and largely neglected eastern European Judaism or at best had little positive to say about it. German Jewish historiography in the nineteenth century dawned with Mendelssohn, whereas the East remained shrouded in the deepest darkness.<sup>30</sup> In the programmatic introduction to the first volume of his world history, Dubnow explicitly criticized this interpretation. He called Jewish historical writing on antiquity from Zunz to Graetz “the theological conception” of Jewish history, “which is based on the proposition that a people without state or territory can appear as an active subject of history only in the area of intellectual life, whereas in other areas of social life it is condemned to be a passive object of the history of the peoples among whom it lives.” Going back to the sources of this conception of history, Dubnow continued:

Our scientific historiography was engaged in western Europe in the middle of the 19th century, when the dogma of assimilation reigned: “Jewry is not a nation, but merely a religious group.” Historiography, submitting to the general tendency, busied itself for the most part with Judaism rather than with its living creator, the Jewish people. Even such an apostate from the generally accepted dogma as our best historian, Graetz, could not withstand the current. A profound overturn in our national self-consciousness, signaling the present epoch, was needed to bring about a corresponding change in the conception of the historical process. The secularization of historiography, its liberation from the trammels of theology, and likewise of “spiritualism” and scholasticism, was bound to follow the secularization of the Jewish national idea. A new understanding of Jewish history is maturing that corresponds more to its actual content and scope. It is becoming clear that over millennia the Jewish people have not only “thought and suffered,” but have in all possible circumstances proceeded to build their life as a separate social unit; and, accordingly, that to reveal this process

of the building of its life as a separate social unit is the primary task of historiography, the object of scientific historiography must be the people, the *national entity, its origin, growth, and struggle for existence*.<sup>31</sup>

Dubnow was aware that he had written less a continuation than an alternative to Graetz's history. Whereas for Graetz Jewish history was essentially "the reflex of the idea" of Judaism,<sup>32</sup> Dubnow regarded it as a "national organism" that existed beyond the boundaries of time and space.

How did Dubnow deal with the fact that since the late eighteenth century, historical development in large parts of Europe seemed not to have followed the path of national autonomy? On the one hand, the western European model led to individual emancipation; on the other hand, political Zionism propagated the idea of a new Jewish territoriality. As a historian, Dubnow had to acknowledge these developments, of course; but his wishful thinking as a politician also played a role, at least between the lines and in his footnotes. In a footnote, Dubnow qualified the fact that French Jews had promised even Napoleon that they would no longer form a nation: "One should bear in mind that, during that epoch, and particularly so in France, the word 'nation' was used to designate the people of the entire kingdom, or, at any rate, that of a specific territory. To deny that Jews are a nation in this sense implied merely a statement of fact. This ambiguous term of 'nation' was used by many who at heart regarded Jews as a nation in the historical sense."<sup>33</sup>

The victory of the autonomist movement that Dubnow predicted was first halted by the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1905: "If the movement for liberation had not been routed 'because Russia could not stand any free regime' the 'third emancipation,' the Russian, would have been realized then. Emancipation would have been granted, not to Jews under a Russian mask, but to the millions of Russian citizens of Jewish nationality. But it was destined that this third emancipation should be postponed until March 1917. However, all its achievements were soon to perish in the horrors of the civil war in devastated Russia."<sup>34</sup> His prognosis for the future was unambiguous: "The trend toward assimilation is gradually being superseded by the modern form of the national movement that promises to be just as characteristic of the twentieth century as [assimilation] was of the nineteenth."<sup>35</sup> In both the third volume of his *Recent History of the Jewish People* (1923) and the tenth volume of his world history (1929), Dubnow explained the political autonomist movement he had founded as the "solution" or "the key

to the problem of diaspora.”<sup>36</sup> In the same way he concluded his article “Diaspora” (1931; for the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*) by noting that “even Zionists are beginning to accept diaspora nationalism, insofar as they acknowledge that in addition to the small national center that might develop in Palestine, an extensive diaspora must continue to exist.”<sup>37</sup>

In Dubnow’s account, Russian Jewish history always plays a central role. He deliberately wrote his main work in Russian, concentrated in his monographs on geographically well-defined subjects such as Hasidism and the Lithuanian Vaad (the assembly of the Lithuanian Jewish communities often called a synod), and put the fate of the eastern European Jews in the foreground of his world history. In a certain sense, he discovered the “Russian Jews,” who in the nineteenth century had seen themselves as Polish or Lithuanian Jews living under the czar’s rule. The assimilated Russian Jews belonged to a small elite, especially in Saint Petersburg, and although Dubnow did not accept their notion of assimilation, he did construct out of the many and diverse histories of the Jews in the czar’s realm a new history of the Russian Jew.<sup>38</sup> Concerning Dubnow’s crucial role in shaping the consciousness of Jews in czarist Russia, the historian Benjamin Nathans wrote, “In Dubnov, Russian Jewry found its own version of the nineteenth-century European ideal: the historian as nation-builder and culture hero.”<sup>39</sup>

Dubnow’s goal was to prove the existence of an “organic” Jewish people spread over centuries and continents, whose foundational experiences were the slavery in and exodus out of Egypt, and who handed down the memory of these experiences from generation to generation. Dubnow always defined the Jewish “people’s soul” (*Volksseele*) in contradistinction to the majority of “others”—and to that extent the experience of diaspora is an essential and not an accidental condition of the Jewish people. At the same time, Dubnow wanted to counter a trend in which Jewish historiography concentrated essentially on intellectual and cultural history, seeing political history as simply the Jews’ “relation to the outside world,” their standing in the state and the degree of their persecution. In contrast, Dubnow saw precisely in institutions and above all the Jewish community (*kehillah*) the bearer of the idea of autonomy that had kept Jews for centuries from being absorbed into their environment. He regarded his approach as “sociological,” by which he meant chiefly an approach emphasizing the history of institutions.

In clear contrast to earlier Jewish historiography, which celebrated classical heroes such as Maimonides or Mendelssohn, Dubnow ac-

knowledges, “I was always an opponent of the classical ‘hero theory’ in historiography.”<sup>40</sup> His hero in Jewish history is not a person but rather an institution: the Jewish community as the bearer of communal self-government, and thus—as he himself put it—a “surrogate for statehood.”<sup>41</sup> The emphasis on Jewish autonomy and its embodiment in the Jewish community (*kehillah*) runs throughout his work.<sup>42</sup> For Dubnow, Jewish self-government in the diaspora is what the religious idea of monotheism was for German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and what was to become for the Zionists the uninterrupted relationship to the Land of Israel. It is at the same time a characteristic trait of Jewish life and a recipe for millennia of survival as a small minority.

The Jews’ striving for autonomy already existed in biblical times, in the lands where they had been dispersed, and continued down to his own time. Thus in the introduction to the first volume of his world history, Dubnow combines historical conclusions with guidelines for current political activity:

During the periods both of its own statehood and of the Diaspora, the history of Jewry is a vivid expression of nationalism, not merely of a religious group among other nations. This continuously living nation has always and everywhere defended the autonomous existence not only of its social life but also of all the areas of its culture. The Diaspora, which was widespread even during the Judean sovereignty, had everywhere its autonomous communities; in many places it had even central organs of self-government, including both legislative and judicial institutions (the Sanhedrin, the academies, and the Patriarchate in Roman-Byzantine Palestine; the Exilarchate, the Gaonim, and legislative academies in Babylon; the “alchemy” and congress of communal delegates in Spain; the Kahals and Vaadim or Kahal Sejms in Poland and Lithuania; and many others). Pre-eminently bound up with this historical process, the latest national movement in Jewry, combining the immemorial heritage of autonomism with the modern principle of the “rights of national minorities,” testifies to the ineradicability of this eternal prime mover of Jewish history, which has survived even in an age of assimilation and of great changes in the life of the nation.<sup>43</sup>

In all the “wandering centers” and under the most diverse hegemonic powers that Dubnow discerned in Jewish history, the Jews survived because of their self-government. While other historians were chiefly interested in Jewish history as an intellectual phenomenon, Dubnow in-

vestigated it primarily in relation to its institutions. He was fascinated not so much by the Babylonian Talmud (considered the most important intellectual achievement of postbiblical Judaism) as by the organization of the Babylonian Jews, with an exilarch at their head and with their high degree of autonomy: "In every city with a substantial population there existed an organized autonomous community."<sup>44</sup> As Dubnow saw it, it was not the academies but rather the communities that shaped history. From Dubnow's description of the Babylonian Jews, Anke Hilbrenner concludes that "for Dubnow the special importance of these academies lay not in their influence on intellectual history, as it usually did in the traditional Jewish conception of history, but rather in their normative effect on the everyday lifeworld of the Jewish people."<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, what interested Dubnow in the next center, Spain, was above all the *alhama* or *aljama*, the Jewish community. The same goes for his treatment of Jews in France before they were driven out in the fourteenth century, and for his description of medieval German Jewry: "They [the rulers] merely took into account the fact that there existed separate Jewish quarters, 'Jewish bishops' or rabbis, having their own autonomous courts of arbitration, as well as other institutions."<sup>46</sup> "The existence of special Jewish quarters, the administration of the 'Jewish bishops' and rabbis, the functioning of autonomous courts of law and other community institutions—the ruling powers accepted all this as a simple fact."<sup>47</sup>

According to Dubnow, in the modern period Jewish history split into two branches. On the one hand, in western Europe centers emerged where history was marked by emancipation and assimilation; on the other hand, there were centers, such as those in eastern Europe and, Dubnow hoped, the United States, where "the principle of community" that Jewish autonomy had embodied for centuries could be continued. Dubnow regarded the preservation of Jewish life as being endangered in the former category and as ensured in the latter one.

Dubnow's scholarly work was strongly influenced by his commitment to autonomy. He explained his decision to make community statutes the center of his research by noting that earlier scholars had paid little attention to these statutes, which were in danger of being lost and destroyed. Thus, he issued a pioneering call for Russian Jews to support a collection of the *pinkassim* (charter books): "I appeal to all educated readers, of whatever party.... I appeal to you all: help us construct history. Not every person can be a great writer or historian, but every one of you can collect documents and help construct our history.... Let us get to work, let us bring our documents home from their places of exile, let us organize and



publish them, and build on them the foundation for the temple of history. Come, let us search and investigate!”<sup>48</sup>

A century before, Zunz had urged German Jews to collect their documents and investigate what he called “rabbinical literature”; Dubnow now addressed a similar appeal to Eastern European Jews. The community books were an important pillar of Dubnow’s historical research. This holds true first of all for his great source collection on the Lithuanian Vaad, which in the light of his political activism plays a key role in his production. In his introduction, Dubnow makes it clear that this Vaad is only one link in the long chain of autonomous Jewish institutions.<sup>49</sup> His positive assessment of autonomous Jewish institutions was definitely not a matter of course in czarist Russia. Jewish thinkers of the Enlightenment in eastern Europe had often distanced themselves from the communities’ corporate bodies. To be sure, this was connected not only with internal Jewish reasons such as modernization and distancing from traditional institutions but also with the fear of antisemitic reactions. Thus, a widespread anti-Jewish reaction was aroused by the publication of the *Kahal Book*—written by Jacob Brafman, a convert to Christianity—which was based on the records of the Jewish community in Minsk. As Israel Bartal rightly stresses, Dubnow transformed the antisemites’ derogatory phrase “a state within the state” into an ideal: by reconnecting with premodern institutions, modern Jewish autonomy would in fact constitute a “state within the state,” because according to Dubnow, the Jews had never completely lost their statehood, but rather transferred it to a “miniature state” in the form of the *kehillah*, the Jewish community.<sup>50</sup>

Like the generations preceding and following him, Dubnow was sure that his approach would allow him finally to come to “a broader scientific conception of Jewish history, to a sociological method.”<sup>51</sup> In other passages he writes, with reference to his understanding of history, that “this conception can rightly claim full scientific objectivity.”<sup>52</sup> Dubnow’s “ultimate ideal of historical scholarship—the production of complete agreement between ideas about the past and historical reality”—was fully in accord with a positivist understanding of history.<sup>53</sup>

Even Dubnow’s more favorable critics found it hard to accept that a historian as politically committed as he was claimed to represent a “purely scientific” conception of history and “complete objectivity.” The young historian Selma Stern (1890–1981) accused him of committing, in reversed form, the error of the scholars of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* who idealized emancipation: “Naturally, a way of writing history from the standpoint of present-day political trends can be fruitful and contain exciting elements. Especially for us in Germany, where for years we have

heard about the period of emancipation for the most part only from supporters of assimilation. But there is nonetheless something embarrassing about viewing great figures such as Frederick II, Napoleon, Goethe, Fichte, Marx, and Dostoevsky solely through the Jewish lens." Above all, Stern complained that Dubnow dealt with the period of emancipation in Prussia "in a foolishly mocking and light tone," and questioned the sincerity of German Jews who were assimilating: "It was after all not simply a matter of fashion, coquetry, and intellectual libertinism, that a whole series of men and women completely lost themselves in German culture at that time. For many of them, it was something felt deep in their hearts."<sup>54</sup> Still more fundamentally, the young Leo Strauss considered Dubnow's claim to objectivity completely off the mark: "The author's political ideals are somewhat tediously aligned with the historical facts."<sup>55</sup>

Dubnow anticipated such criticisms, and in his foreword to the third volume of his *Recent History of the Jewish People*, he wrote, "The recognition of my system will delight me, as a symptom of the enlightenment of people's minds; its refusal will not surprise me, since this work, through a long series of facts, describes the historical process that tragically led to the rejection of the national conception of Judaism"<sup>56</sup> Heinrich Stern, the leading spokesperson for liberal Judaism in Germany, even accused Dubnow of intellectual rabble-rousing after the latter criticized the refusal to allow Jews to pursue careers as military officers in Prussia: "In conclusion, we would like to say to him quite openly that any insult to the German people affects us as well and that we are not inclined to pay for windowpanes broken by an outsider—even if his name is Dubnow."<sup>57</sup> Dubnow's comment on this remark in the third volume of his memoirs is laconic: "The reviewer was, however, to see a time when not only the windowpanes in German Jews' homes but the whole life of the Jewish people in Germany was destroyed, regardless of their patriotism and German nationalism."<sup>58</sup>

When he wrote these lines, Dubnow himself had already left Germany. Now in his eighties, he was not allowed to spend his last years in quiet Berlin exile, as he had wished. On April 8, 1933, he noted, "Like many others, I also find myself in this painful situation, getting ready to leave.... I still cling to the idea: shouldn't I stay after all, move back into this quiet corner of Grunewald? But how can one live in a quiet corner of Grunewald when the wolves are howling all around? ... And where should I go? To noisy Paris, quiet Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Latvia or Lithuania?" A month later it was already clear to him that he could no longer stay: "I am suffocating in the Reich of evil, in the Reich of hatred and violence. No longer have the strength to breathe this poisoned air,

but at the age of seventy-two, taking up my traveler's staff is anything but easy."<sup>59</sup>

As soon as he arrived in the suburb of Riga where he was to spend his last years, he returned mentally to the starting point of his life, as he noted in the conclusion to his memoirs: "Above all, I would have liked to visit my hometown of Mstislavl, which I have not seen for thirty-eight years. There I would bow before my ancestors' graves. I would stand reverently at the grave of my grandfather, the great Talmudic scholar Rabbi Benzion, and whisper to him: 'It's me, your grandson, now almost as old as you were when you left this world. Do you remember my rebellion against the tradition that was holy for you, your concern and your sad prophecy that I would someday return to the source from which I had turned away? Your prophecy has been fulfilled, even though in a different way. We are two signposts at a branching of the roads in the century, and both of us point to Judaism's sources.'"<sup>60</sup> As a refugee from the Soviet Union, he could not return to his homeland. Thus, he fell into the hands of the German occupation forces that took control of Riga in July 1941. Regarding the way Dubnow was killed toward the end of 1941, different versions soon appeared. According to some accounts his last words were "*Shraybt yidn, un farshraybt!*" ("Write, Jews, write it down!").<sup>61</sup>

In many respects, Dubnow established a new way of seeing Jewish history: he shifted its emphasis in the modern period from Germany to Eastern Europe, from intellectual history to social history, regarded it as the history of a nation that needed no territory of its own, and finally, defined it almost exclusively in secular terms. The historian David Weinberg therefore sees in Dubnow's work a transformation of traditional religious ideas and conceptualities into their secular counterparts: "For Dubnow, history thus took the place of midrash, or rabbinic gloss on a sacred text, as a didactic tool for a people that he was convinced no longer believed in the existence of a God of Israel but still wished to maintain their 'holy' treasures."<sup>62</sup> Yerushalmi's observation that history could become a religion for unbelieving Jews is probably applicable to no one more than to Dubnow, who claimed to be praying in the temple of history that he himself erected.

### Polish Jewish Historiography between the Wars

In Poland as well, we can discern a shift from a historiography ruled by the idea of emancipation to a national perspective during the first decades of the twentieth century. Jewish historiography in the period between the wars thus should also be understood as a rejection of nineteenth-

century assimilated Polish Jewish historians who, like Hilary Nussbaum (see chapter 1), had emphasized that the Jews were a religious minority and as such should be integrated. In an increasingly politicized atmosphere, historians were also involved in the debates between different political camps—Zionists, Marxists, and diaspora nationalists. Depending on their own self-conception or reading audience, they wrote in Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, or German. Whereas Nussbaum's and Kraushar's generation had been able to identify with the generation that founded German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, later Polish Jewish historians must be understood against the background of Dubnow's autonomist ideas and the intellectual world of Zionism.

Around the turn of the century, Polish Jewish historians could still apply to their own situation the negative image sketched by Dubnow with regard to Russian Jewish historiography. In his much-noticed call for the foundation of the Russian Jewish Historical Society (1891), Dubnow had written, "We, the Russian Jews, have not yet emerged from the condition of infancy so far as our own historical consciousness is concerned, for we know next to nothing about our history in a territory where we have been living for eight centuries."<sup>63</sup> Nine years later, the Polish Jewish historian Mojżesz Schorr (1874–1941) expressed a similar view on the occasion of the third meeting of Polish historians in Kraków in 1900. He provided a devastating insight into the status of Polish Jewish historical research, which, he said, still had to be created "ex nihilo."<sup>64</sup> Schorr belonged to a new generation of Polish Jewish historians. He was appointed to a professorship at the University of Lemberg and later taught in Warsaw; he was an expert not only on his specialty, the ancient history of the Near East, but also on the history of the Polish Jews and especially Jewish self-government.<sup>65</sup>

Another member of this generation was Ignacy Schiper (1884–1943), who was born in Tarnov. His main subject was the cultural and economic history of Jews in Poland. On the eve of the First World War, he was still bringing out the heavy artillery to attack earlier Polish Jewish historians. Not only did they lack an adequate basis in the sources, he argued, but their works "were also lacking in objectivity."<sup>66</sup> He was among the most prominent representatives of Polish Jewry during the interwar period. For years he was a member of the Sejm (the Polish Parliament) as a deputy for the Marxist-Zionist Poaley Zion Party and later for the General Zionists. His historical writings ranged from important works on medieval economic history to the articles on modern Yiddish culture that he wrote for the German-language *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and other

publications. The most prominent Polish Jewish historian of this generation was Majer Balaban (1877–1942), who came from Lwów (Lemberg, Lwiw) and is considered the founder of modern Polish Jewish historiography, to which his *History of the Jews in Cracow* and other local studies made an important contribution.<sup>67</sup>

It is no accident that all three of these major Polish Jewish historians of the early twentieth century came from Galicia, where Polish culture was dominant, and that they studied at the universities of Lwów and Kraków. It was at the University of Lwów that a national Polish school of historical studies was established before the First World War. This school provided the intellectual foundation for the Polish national movement, and also served as the basis for a particular Jewish Polish historiography.<sup>68</sup> The intense concentration of Polish Jewish historians on the age of Polish statehood and their insistence that a Polish Jewry continued to exist as an entity after the partition of the country can only be understood in this larger politico-economic context.<sup>69</sup>

While, on the one hand, Polish historiography pointed the way for this generation of Polish Jewish historians, on the other hand, it was shaped by Dubnow's perspective.<sup>70</sup> Between 1909 and 1914 Balaban was a regular contributor to Dubnow's journal *Evrejskaja Starina* (Jewish Antiquities). In the new Polish state established after the First World War, Balaban and Schorr were soon to hold important institutional positions in Jewish life—the former as leader of the Tachkemoni rabbinical seminary, and the latter as preacher of the Liberal synagogue in Warsaw, Europe's largest synagogue.<sup>71</sup> Balaban's assessment of the situation of Jewish historiography in the new Poland was quite critical: "The war annihilated the best intentions. The centers in St. Petersburg and Posen [Poznan] were irretrievably lost, and in independent Poland we still haven't advanced very far in this area, either. A few scholars are active in the field of Jewish history, but at present one cannot talk about systematic work or organized scholarship. This is all the more painful because writing on the history of the Jews in the West has made a great leap forward.... Here, on the other hand, there is a lack of initiative, a lack of people and means, and a remarkable indifference even among those who understand what historical scholarship means. Everything that is achieved here is achieved by accident and, with few exceptions, more than dilettantish."

In addition, Balaban criticized the old problem that had long concerned modern historians: "Often enough, old-fashioned Jewish scholars know nothing about Polish historiography, whereas Christian historians know neither Hebrew nor Hebrew literature and are not in a position to

use Jewish sources (community archives, inscriptions, etc.). In this way we have two groups of scholars, neither of which perceives the other, and many efforts go nowhere.”

Balaban called for immediate action: “All that has to stop, and systematic work has to begin, based on sources that have been edited competently in accord with the rules of modern historiography. Above all, a responsible leadership for this branch of Polish scholarship must be created, a sort of center that could set guidelines for scholars throughout the country and beyond. Most appropriate would be the establishment of university professorships in Jewish history or the history of Jews in Poland, at least in cities where there are large archives and where one can count on attracting many younger adepts in this area of scholarship.”<sup>72</sup>

Balaban’s call was not entirely without effect. In Poland between the two wars, the conditions for fulfilling his wishes were not ideal, but Jewish historiography flourished there. There were different causes for this brief flowering. First and foremost, there was a Jewish community numbering more than three million people in Poland, most of whom were still at home in their own culture and language. With secularization and politicization, which were also increasing in Poland, some energies that had previously been invested in the religious area were now transferred to scholarship. In addition, the historical profession in Poland experienced an upswing as a result of the founding of new institutions (the Polish Historical Society had fifteen regional branches in 1925, new universities were founded, and archival sources were made available) that made it easier to conduct systematic research on Polish Jewish history as well.

Between 1919 and 1939, more than seventy master’s theses and doctoral dissertations on Polish Jewish history were written at the University of Warsaw alone, most of them under the direction of Balaban, who became a lecturer at the university in 1928.<sup>73</sup> Together with Schorr, he founded, also in 1928, the Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych (Institute for Judaic Scholarship) in Warsaw, where a series of younger historians taught, now focusing more on the nineteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Among them were Raphael Mahler (1899–1977), Filip Friedman, and Emanuel Ringelblum (1900–1944). The languages of instruction were Hebrew and Polish (the latter was used by Schiper and Balaban). One of the institute’s most important tasks was the training of teaching staff for the newly founded Hebrew secondary schools.<sup>75</sup>

In the YIVO, Jewish historiography found an additional institutional home. Here Yiddish was the official language, and despite some academic

collaboration, historians like Schorr and Balaban were ultimately considered “assimilators” who were prepared to sacrifice Yiddish culture for the sake of Polish culture. The YIVO was founded in Berlin in 1925, but soon moved its main activities to Vilna, which was then part of Poland. Until 1933, its historical department remained in Berlin, where some of the most prominent Jewish historians—Dubnow, Elias Tcherikower, Jacob Lestschinsky, Mark and Rachel Wischnitzer, and Nokhem Shtif—had gathered. In contrast to the economic and statistics department, which was also located in Berlin, the history department did not succeed in establishing closer contact with German Jewish colleagues. The move to Vilna of the YIVO, which was addressed especially to the Yiddish-speaking masses, was only partly to the advantage of the scholarship-oriented history department.

In view of these conditions it is not surprising that the YIVO became most active in Poland, and especially in Warsaw and Vilna. In many ways material was collected there that was also supposed to document the everyday lives of Jews: questionnaires on the current situation of Jews in Poland were handed out and systematically evaluated; “collectors” provided the institute with archival materials from various areas; and countrywide competitions were announced in which Jewish youths were asked to write autobiographical texts. A historical committee for Warsaw and, from 1934 on, all of Poland was devoted to research on Polish Jewish history.

The YIVO historians consciously saw themselves as not only a thematic but also a methodological counterweight to German language *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In their research, current issues played a dominant role. Thus their interests were centered on contemporary history, questions of popular history displaced an often-elitist perspective on intellectual history, and the Yiddish language served not only as a medium but also as a program. Tcherikower, who represented the history department, made this distinction particularly clear: “We see before us neither the history of a historical mummy embalmed by theological scholastics nor a religious tribe with a metaphysical mission, but rather a living nation, a worldwide people with its own worldwide history that has fought for its own existence.”<sup>76</sup> Rejecting vehemently all critics who declared that one can investigate a period only from a significant distance, Tcherikower argued for focusing research on the period preceding the beginning of the First World War precisely because it was “more closely tied to present Jewish realities.”

Emanuel Ringelblum (1900–1944), for whom historiography was more than a dry academic exercise, made a similar assertion: “We are doing

communal work, a work that intends not simply to make known the Jewish past but serve as a support in the struggle that the Jewish community is carrying out in Poland for its national and social liberation.” The dean of the YIVO historians, Dubnow, summed up the difference with *Wissenschaft des Judentums* at the first meeting of the Berlin members of the history department in 1929: “The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* researches Judaism, we—the people.”<sup>77</sup> Shtif emphasized that the thinking of Eastern European Jewish scholars revolved around a living Jewish people, whereas that of scholars involved in Western European *Wissenschaft des Judentums* “based themselves on the idea that Judaism is an object of research, a historical nation the existence of which ended more or less with the emancipation of the Jews and that is already no longer a creative agent.”<sup>78</sup> At the *Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych*, Israel Osterser, a young lecturer on the Talmud, compared Western European *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which wanted to erect a monument to the vanished Jewish culture, with Jewish scholarship in Eastern Europe, which still acted as part of a living culture: “Living peoples do not erect monuments. A living people strives to know its past as exactly as it can, but only with the intention of sinking deep roots into the depths of the past in order to shoot up all the more boldly and powerfully into a bright future.”<sup>79</sup>

From the outset, Jewish historiography in Poland was part of an intensely politicized society. The biographies of its most important practitioners show that it was scarcely possible to make a sharp distinction between history and current politics. Between 1935 and 1938, Schorr was a member of the Polish Senate, in which he supported rights for Jews against the background of antisemitic legislation and economic measures. Schiper was a member of parliament for the Zionists, Mahler did not try to hide his Zionist-Marxist position, Nathan Michael Gelber (1891–1966)—who published intensively on the political history of the Jews in Poland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as on the early history of Zionism—directed the Polish office of the Zionist *Keren Heyesod* Fund, and Ringelblum was—like many of the “young historians”—active in the socialist-Zionist leftist organization *Poaley Zion*.<sup>80</sup> These historians frequently made explicit their work’s current relationship to the Jews’ political situation.

For Schiper in particular, the basic principle was that as a historian, he should always relate himself to present-day questions and adopt a specific standpoint. Thus in a review, he expressly criticized his colleague Balaban for having tried to write objective history without taking a particular viewpoint. Balaban was, Schiper wrote, an outstanding chronicler, but not a historian who looked to history to answer the questions for



the present. It is precisely this, Schiper maintains, that is the historian's chief task: "Our aim is always the present. It is the understanding of the present that we seek in our history. One must want something from the past."<sup>81</sup> The historian must "forge a sword for battle out of knowledge."<sup>82</sup>

The labor movement and the history of Jewish everyday life now gained new interest. Schiper wrote: "We know the Sabbath Jew with his festive spirit, but it is now high time to become acquainted with the history of the workday Jew and his workday ideas, and to turn the spotlight on Jewish labor. They [the early historians] gave us a splendid picture of the spiritual leaders of Diaspora Jewry. We are, however, left completely in the dark about the history of the untold hundreds of thousands whose claim to recognition rests not on the riches of the spirit but on their toil and labor."<sup>83</sup>

With his Marxist approach, which was also influenced by the Zionist socialist thinker Ber Borochow, Mahler was above all a pioneer. He was the leader of the Academic Seminar on Jewish History in Warsaw, which sought to make Jewish history a scholarly discipline in Poland. Ringelblum was one of its most important members. In his historical writings, he was concerned to emphasize the commonalities linking Poles and Jews. He rejected as assimilationist the historiography of Kraushar and Nussbaum, and assumed the existence of a separate Jewish nation. But he also criticized Dubnow's idealization of the autonomy of Jewish communities, just as he campaigned against all those who regarded the history of Jews in Poland as a history of suffering and nothing else. In his view, Jews and Poles had much in common. It was a myth, he said, that the centuries-long history of Jews and Poles was divided by a "Great Wall of China." Like many of his predecessors, Ringelblum revealed glimpses of political intentions. By stressing commonalities in an "objective historical presentation," he wrote, the Jewish historian could perform a concrete political function in the present, and "even if the performance concerns something that happened in the very distant past," he [the Jewish historian] can contribute to the rapprochement of Polish and Jewish societies.<sup>84</sup>

As the editors of the Yiddish journal *Yunger historiker*, Mahler and Ringelblum, along with Jakub Berman (1901–84), who was also Marxist oriented and was first involved with the left fringe of Poaley Zion and later the Communist Party, set the crucial tone for this new generation.<sup>85</sup> Other historians, especially younger ones born around 1900, contributed to this journal. The historian Heidemarie Petersen summed up the important bridging function of this younger generation and its organ:

“It [*Yunger historiker*] willingly adopted the new model of Jewish historiography that Tcherikower had formulated rather abstractly and that Schiper had transformed into practical guidelines for research. This new model sought to adapt Dubnow’s ‘popular’ [*volksnah*] impulse to recent conditions in Poland and at the same time to transform it, by professionalizing historiography, from a mere *zamlers* [collectors’] movement into a ‘true’ science.”<sup>86</sup>

The prevailing conditions make the dilemma of Polish Jewish historiography clear: it enjoyed no academic institutes, professorships, or state support. But what was even harder to bear was that private individuals did not support Jewish academic historiography either. Thus the coeditor of the first number of *Yunger historiker*, Ringelblum, looked to Germany: “Jewish society in Western Europe, and especially in Germany, can serve as a model in this area.”<sup>87</sup> Mahler himself was responsible for most of the articles in the new journal and gave it a secular Marxist character. One of the most important articles in the first volume, in which other new subjects such as the history of Jewish agriculture and Jewish artisans were discussed, concerned the theoretical foundations of Jewish history. It dealt not only with Krochmal, Zunz, Graetz, and Dubnow but also with Spengler and Weber. Mahler considered the greatest problem faced by Jewish historiography to be the dominance of the religious components. If these could be relegated to the margins, then the homogeneity of Jewish history would be put in question. Deviating from Dubnow, Mahler asserted that it was more important to refer to the influence of the respective environments than to construct an unbroken continuum of Jewish history in all ages and all parts of the world. If a sociological method free of all mystification could be developed, it would turn out, Mahler maintained, that Jewish history must be seen differently in each of its specific periods.<sup>88</sup>

In 1937 Mahler emigrated to the United States, and then in 1950 went to Israel, where in 1961 he became a professor at the University of Tel Aviv. Between 1956 and 1970 five volumes of his *History of the Jewish People* appeared (in Hebrew). In this work he remained true to his Marxist ideal, and interpreted as expressions of class conflict classical confrontations in Jewish history such as the debate between the Karaites and rabbinical Judaism in the Middle Ages, or that between Hasidic Jews and their opponents (the Mitnagdim). For him, Jewish history was shaped above all by the “peculiar economic structure of a people without its own state.”<sup>89</sup> In his studies Mahler paid special attention to the socioeconomic bases of Jewish life in the diaspora and saw in the foundation of the State

of Israel an opportunity to normalize Jewish life. Posterity was to remember Ringelblum as a witness to an inhuman time and its chronicler. In his secret “Oneg-Schabbes” archive in the Warsaw ghetto, he and his group preserved for posterity valuable documents on the period of the German occupation.<sup>90</sup>

Polish Jewish historians saw themselves as indebted to Dubnow in many ways: he had replaced a German-centered perspective with one focused on Eastern Europe; he had written the history of a nation rather than the usual cultural and religious history; and he had opened people’s eyes to the social history dimension. Nonetheless, these historians’ disagreements with Dubnow’s approach should not be overlooked; they are to be found in the areas of political ideology and methodology. In contrast to Dubnow, they were already academically trained historians who had positions in Polish universities or newly founded Jewish academic institutions. Polish Jewish historians were not shaped by the national autonomism that had so strongly influenced Dubnow but rather by the Polish nationalist movement, which they experienced especially in Galicia. In their political activities they were not adherents of liberal autonomy; most of them were socialistically oriented. Finally, they extended the broad spectrum of social history far more than Dubnow, who was chiefly interested in the institution of the community. In contrast to Dubnow and German Jewish historians, Polish Jewish historians focused almost exclusively on the history of Jews in Poland, and especially on the period before the partition of the country as well as the contemporary period. They thus reflected the general historiography in Poland between the wars; after Polish statehood was restored, this historiography was concerned chiefly with emphasizing the unity of the Polish nation.

### Under the Soviet Star: Jewish History as Class History

Polish Jewish researchers were not the only ones committed to everyday culture. If Mahler, as a Marxist Zionist, represented the voice of Jewish historiography within a democratic pluralist society, writers on Jewish history in the Soviet Union operated under completely different conditions. The two revolutions of 1917 freed Russian Jews from the hated czarist dictatorship. The new Soviet regime officially condemned anti-semitism. At the same time, it rejected both the Jewish religion and the Jews’ own political expression, as it was articulated, for example, by the Jewish Labor Bund. Although Jews were to persist as a people in the Soviet Union, they were supposed to ultimately disappear as a community with its own religious and cultural identity. The Yiddish language was

used as a means of communicating with the Jewish masses and influencing them to approve of the new authorities. A Jewish section of the Communist Party, the Yevseksia, was founded specifically for this purpose.

Historical research was also supposed to help make Jews loyal Soviet citizens. Thus in the 1920s there emerged, alongside other cultural institutions such as Yiddish newspapers and the Hebrew theater Habima, several Jewish institutes for scholarly research. The centers of this institutionalized research were in Belarus and the Ukraine, which had preserved a certain degree of independence and in which Jews were recognized as a national minority. In both Minsk (1924) and Kiev (1927–28, with a short-lived subsidiary branch in Odessa, 1928), research departments on Jewish history and culture were established as part of the national academies. The Jewish Department of the Institute for Belarussian Culture in Minsk began its activities in 1924 and starting in 1926 it even published its own scholarly journal, the *Tsaytskrift*. Its basic ideological position becomes clear when one considers the tasks of the History Section connected with the department in Minsk. In addition to a commission on statistics and demography, there was another one concerned with the study of revolutionary movements. In Moscow, the special Section for the Study of the Revolutionary Movement among Jews as well as the Pan-Russian Scientific Society for the Study of Jewish Language, Literature, and History were established under the supervision of the Yevseksia.<sup>91</sup>

The ideological premises of the publications and conferences of these organizations are beyond doubt. But if we scratch the surface a little, we also find innovative scholarly contributions that are devoted for the most part to the social and economic conditions of Jewish life. The polemic against previous “bourgeois” research is always a compelling necessity, as can be seen, for example, in the examination of L. Holomshtok’s Hasidic stories in the Minsk *Tsaytskrift*. In the introduction to this study we read, “Hasidic stories are taken as the basic material for the present work. We have set ourselves the task of digging out the historical kernel, tearing away the Romantic veil, and uncovering social antagonisms.... Up to this point, little has been done to make use of this material for the goals of historical research. The few bourgeois historians who have concerned themselves with it have done so only in order to strengthen clerical Romanticism still further. Here bourgeois ‘science’ went hand in hand with clericalism.”<sup>92</sup> In this article Hasidic narratives are used above all to demonstrate class conflicts within Jewish society, denounce its economic and intellectual elite, and make the latter responsible for the impoverishment of the masses.

Like other schools of historiography, the Soviet one also claimed to do away with old prejudices and finally consider the past objectively. Thus, in a study on social and economic changes among Lithuanian and Belarussian Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Israel Sosis, one of the most important Belarussian Jewish historians, wrote, “The necessity of studying as a separate entity the history of the Jews in the Lithuanian-Belarussian region is not a result of our national policy, but a purely objective phenomenon.”<sup>93</sup> What looked to outsiders like a purely propagandistic means was seen by its protagonists as the foundation of a new scientific theory.

Criticism of earlier “bourgeois scholarship” was expressed systematically during the second Pan-Russian Cultural Conference of the Jewish sections of the Communist Party held in April 1928 in Kharkov. German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was said to have been founded by the bourgeoisie as a weapon to be used in the battle for emancipation and to have introduced the “assimilationist-theological period.” The second period, described as “historical-nationalist” and connected with Dubnow, was also rejected. It was supposed to have been begun by the Russian Jewish middle class, and directed against the masses and workers. Finally, Yiddish-language scholarship, as practiced by those associated with the YIVO, was rejected as petit bourgeois (it was called *Hokhmas Yidish*, playing on the Hebrew word for scholarship on Judaism, *hokhmat Yisrael*): “By leaning to petit bourgeois nationalism and not serving the class interests of the masses, it serves to draw the masses from their real cultural interests, and is fruitless and reactionary.” On the other hand, the task of Soviet Jewish scholarship is clearly defined: “It is a scholarship of the proletariat. Its method is Marxist. Its task is to reconstruct the Jewish environment on Socialist foundations.”<sup>94</sup>

“For us, it is clear from the outset that there is no value-free science [*visnshaft stam azoy*] in accord with the formula, ‘art for art’s sake,’ for there is no emotional or intellectual movement that is pure, abstract from society, and separate from real life. The whole of intellectual culture is statically and dynamically only a function of the social-material, that is, of economic life.”<sup>95</sup> In this definition, Soviet scholarship distinguishes itself from what it regards as the upper-bourgeois, middle-class, and petit bourgeois efforts of its predecessors. A clear demarcation from the YIVO that had been founded a few years earlier and settled in Vilna was particularly necessary, because there research in the same language and also partly on socialist assumptions was carried out by scholars with whom there had often been lively contacts before the political change. Thus,

in the report of the conference of the Jewish sections of the Communist Party every commonality is denied: "But similarity is not identity.... As an object of scientific study, the Jewish people are one thing for a Marxist-Leninist researcher and an entirely different one for petit bourgeois Yiddish eclectics."<sup>96</sup> Here the claim that only Soviet research can be truly scientific is obvious. Attempts to write Marxist Jewish historiography outside the Soviet Union, such as those made by Mahler, are also explicitly rejected: "The only ones who have adopted the clearly expressed methodological standpoint of historical materialism, that is, of Marxism-Leninism, are the young Jewish scholars in the Soviet Union."<sup>97</sup> Scholarship in accord with these criteria therefore is possible only in the Soviet Union, where there has been a radical turning away from a science that had been guided chiefly by personalities and ideas, in order to adopt a single goal: "the history of socioeconomic processes and class movements. Class ideologies and class characteristics must be researched."<sup>98</sup> Finally, this kind of Soviet historiographical research should be carried out in Yiddish.

How narrow a path the Soviet Jewish historians followed is shown in the work of Israel Sosis, the driving force behind Belarussian Jewish historical studies. In the Minsk *Tsayshrift*, Sosis published numerous articles on subjects such as the "Social History of the Jews in Lithuania and Belarus," or "Jewish Craftsmen and Their Workers in Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine."<sup>99</sup> His *History of Jewish Social Movements in Russia during the Nineteenth Century* appeared in 1929. Its foreword begins with Marx's name, and in it the author tries to show that the oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe were "simply part of the general history of feudalism and serfdom." He criticizes bourgeois-liberal groups among Jewish intellectuals in Saint Petersburg and also Jewish Enlightenment thinkers who are supposed to have put the Jewish masses under the "yoke of the fanatics."<sup>100</sup> This work was strongly marked by ideology, but it did not go far enough for Soviet authorities. Sosis did not subdivide the Jews into exploiting and exploited classes, emphasizing instead that they were as a whole the object of national and religious hatred that was, however, based on economics.

An anonymous "editor's" foreword to Sosis's book notes that the manuscript had been completed two years earlier and claims that it was being published only because there was no comprehensive account of Russian Jews during the nineteenth century. But at the same time, it points out the work's weaknesses: the use of "neutral" concepts such as "third estate" rather than "bourgeoisie," an insufficiently strong condemnation

of the kahal (the leadership of the Jewish community) and of the Jewish Labor Bund, and the suggestion that Jewish nationalism resulted from antisemitism. The publication of this book also marked the end of Jewish historians' ability to conduct somewhat independent research in the Soviet Union. "It is safe to assume that even one year later the book could no longer have been published in Russia," Alfred Greenbaum wrote.<sup>101</sup>

A much harder line was taken in A. D. Yuditskii's *The Jewish Bourgeoisie and the Jewish Proletariat in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, which was published a year after Sosis's book and no longer seeks to preserve even the appearance of objectivity. The Haskala is seen as merely representing the interests of the Jewish upper bourgeoisie, and above all, the antisemitism and corruption of the czarist regime are supposed to be laid bare. In 1930, the Jewish section of the Faculty of Pedagogy in Minsk was replaced by a section for antireligious propaganda—an act whose significance is obvious.<sup>102</sup> In the same year, the last issue of the Minsk *Tsaytskrift* devoted to historical subjects appeared. Its foreword adopted a more radical tone and referred for the first time to Joseph Stalin. The last issue of the journal, which was devoted solely to literary subjects, appeared in 1931. The Kiev Institute (in 1929, renamed the Institute for Proletarian Jewish Culture) also had to close as a result of the radicalization of Stalinist politics. In the Jewish Autonomous Oblast of Birobidzhan officially established in 1934 no works on Jewish history worth mentioning were published, any more than they were elsewhere in the Soviet Union at this time.

Within the framework of the politics of nationalities in the 1920s, Soviet research was short-lived but nonetheless had great hopes of shedding new light on Jewish history from a Marxist perspective. Those engaged in this project worked for the most part in the Ukraine and Belarus, and regarded themselves as providing an alternative to the historical projects being carried out in neighboring Poland, which were related in many respects. With the change in Soviet nationalities policy in general and the restriction of Jewish cultural activity in particular, this research came to an end in the early 1930s. Whereas literary activity in Yiddish survived somewhat longer in the Soviet Union, the experiment of writing Jewish history in accord with Soviet ideology was considered to have failed by that time.<sup>103</sup>

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Fig. 4.1. Solomon Joseph. Solomon, *High Tea in the Sukkah*, 1906. Ink, pencil, and gouache on paper. The Jewish Museum, New York. Gift of Edward J. So-  
vatkin. Photo by John Parnell. Photo credit: The Jewish Museum, New York/Art  
Resource, NY.

#### 4. JEWISH HISTORY WITHOUT TEARS?

##### *New Perspectives in the West*

There is no modern Jewish history, only a Jewish martyrology.

—Lewis Namier, quoted by Isaiah Berlin

Surely it is time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe, and to adopt a view more in accord with historic truth.

—Salo Wittmayer Baron, *Ghetto und Emanzipation*

LIKE THE PRECEDING CHAPTER, this one begins with a religious theme in the midst of a society in the process of secularizing itself. This time the background of the picture is formed not by the synagogue but rather by a sukkah, the traditional Jewish hut or booth. The booth serves the British Jews depicted here not as a provisional resting place during their journey to the hereditary homeland but instead as a comfortable home in the diaspora. And as in the preceding illustrations, the religious framework stands in stark contrast to a nontraditional theme. *High Tea in the Sukkah* (1906) is the title of this picture by the English Jewish painter Solomon Joseph Solomon (1860–1927), who produced not only highly prized portraits (e.g., of the writer Israel Zangwill) but also pictures of the House of Lords and the London Stock Exchange. The Orthodox British chief rabbi Herman Adler is portrayed framed by typical motifs connected with the Feast of the Booths commemorating the exodus out of Egypt, while the ladies wearing elegant hats and the bareheaded gentlemen might have been taken directly from an afternoon tea in London high society.

Nothing suggests a discussion spiced with antisemitic elements of the kind that was launched by Liebermann's *Jesus in the Temple*, and no skeptical perspective mars the harmony of this picture as it does in Maurice Minkowski's painting of the synagogue. The self-confidence of a comfortable diaspora that characterizes these London Jews in their booth also characterizes the historical perspective of the founders of the modern school of Jewish historiography in the United States and Great Britain, Salo Baron, who held the first chair for Jewish history in a Western uni-

versity, and Cecil Roth, who, as a reader at Oxford, was able to establish Jewish history as an academic subject in elite British universities. In the years preceding the Shoah, both these men waged a passionate battle against the nineteenth-century reduction of the Jewish past to a “history of suffering.” It is significant that Baron’s most often quoted expression is his rejection of “the lachrymose conception of Jewish history,” and that the subtitle of Roth’s biography is *Historian without Tears*. Both of them not only lived in a relatively comfortable diaspora but also painted a picture of a harmonious Jewish past.

Roth gave the title of a programmatic essay, “The Most Persecuted People?” a provocative question mark, and he quoted Zunz’s well-known remarks to oppose his own point of view to them: “If there is an ascending scale of suffering, Israel has reached its highest degree. If the duration of afflictions and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews may vie with the aristocracy of any land. If a literature which owns a few classical tragedies is deemed rich, what place should be assigned to a tragedy which extends over fifteen centuries in which the poets and actors were also the heroes?”<sup>1</sup>

These remarks by the most important representative of nineteenth-century Jewish studies did not resonate in Jewish historiography alone. They also appear as the epigraph to a chapter in George Eliot’s novel *Daniel Deronda*, and stood symbolically for the interpretation of history that Graetz called “the history of suffering and learning.” Whereas the Russian Jewish historian Dubnow rejected mainly the restriction to intellectual history, his younger colleagues in English-language scholarship turned mainly against the other half of Graetz’s formula. This was particularly true of Baron and Roth. Their efforts to “normalize” Jewish history may also be connected with the fact that as postemancipation Jews in New York and Oxford, and later as professors or readers at respected universities, they were awarded the academic laurels that their predecessors from Jost to Dubnow had been denied. In this respect they were their generation’s principal opponents of a Jewish history of suffering, but they were able to follow an important model in the English domain.

Israel Abrahams (1858–1925) began teaching at Jews’ College in London (now known as the London School of Jewish Studies) in 1902 and was then named a reader in rabbinic literature at Cambridge. As the editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, he exercised a major influence on English-language Jewish studies, and in his fundamental work on Jewish life in the Middle Ages (1896) he had already struck this positive tone: “A merry spirit smiled on Jewish life in the middle ages, joyousness forming,

in the Jewish conception, the coping stone of piety.... There can be no greater mistake than to imagine that the Jews allowed their sufferings to blacken their life or to cramp their optimism.”<sup>2</sup>

### Baron in New York: Against the Lachrymose Version of Jewish History

In 1928 the leading American Jewish periodical, *Menorah Journal*, published a provocative essay by a young and previously little-known historian. Its title was “Ghetto and Emancipation: Should We Revise the Traditional View?” With this ten-page essay, Baron, a historian who had been born in Tarnow, Galicia, in 1895, had taken three doctorates in Vienna, and had also been ordained as a rabbi, struck a raw nerve. He argued for a revaluation of virtually all the previous values of Jewish historiography. While Graetz had spoken of the history of suffering until the entry into modernity, and Dubnow had also sensed that emancipation was the dawn of a new, better age—indeed, while even Zionist historians had drawn a dark picture of the Middle Ages and the modern age in exile before the beginning of immigration into the Land of Israel, Baron warned against any such dichotomy. Long before Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer described the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in their core text of the school of Critical Theory, Baron had already recognized it at work in Jewish history. Whereas in Baron’s model, things were not nearly as bad for Jews in the Middle Ages and the early modern period as historians had suggested, the modern age was accompanied by dangers to the continued existence of the Jews whose scope could not yet be gauged.

For the Jews of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emancipation had become a kind of end in itself. This was pointed out most clearly by the philosopher Franz Rosenzweig: “What is it then that holds or has held German Jewry together since the beginning of emancipation? ... The answer is terrifying. Only one thing ... : emancipation itself, the Jewish battle for justice.”<sup>3</sup> Thus Baron also begins his essay with this observation: “The history of the Jews in the last century and a half has turned about one central fact: that of Emancipation. But what has Emancipation really meant to the Jew? The generally accepted view has it that before the French Revolution the Jews of Europe lived in a state of extreme wretchedness under medieval conditions, subject to incessant persecution and violence, but that after the Revolution a new era of enlightenment came to the nations, which forthwith struck off the bonds that fettered the Jew and opened up the gates that shut him off from civilized life.

Prisoner in the Ghetto, denied access to the resources and activities of Western society, distorted intellectually, morally, spiritually by centuries of isolation and torture, the Jew was set free by the Emancipation.”<sup>4</sup>

Baron rejects any such opposition of “the black of the Jewish Middle Ages and the white of the post-Emancipation period.” In his view, such assessments can be attributed to the wish to elaborate an optimistic view of the future: “If in so short a time the Jew has risen from such great depths, is it not logical to hope that a few more years will bring him perfect freedom?” A fresh look at Jewish history nonetheless leads to quite different conclusions: “If the status of the Jew (his privileges, opportunities, and actual life) in those centuries was in fact not as low as we are in the habit of thinking, then the miracle of Emancipation was not so great as we supposed.”<sup>5</sup>

Baron challenges the claim that before emancipation, the Jews had no equal rights: “The simple fact is that there was then no such thing as ‘equal rights.’” It is “not surprising and certainly no evidence of discrimination that the Jews did not have ‘equal rights’—no one had them.”<sup>6</sup> It is even the case, Baron goes on, that Jews “had fewer duties and more rights than the great bulk of the population—the enormous mass of peasants, the great majority of whom were little more than appurtenances of the soil on which they were born.... In contrast to this class the Jews were well off. They could move freely from place to place with few exceptions, they could marry whomever they wanted, they had their own courts, and were judged according to their own laws. Even in mixed cases with non-Jews, not the local tribunal but usually a special judge appointed by the king or some high official had competence. Sometimes, as in Poland, the Jews even exercised influence in the nomination of such a *judex judaeorum* for mixed cases.”<sup>7</sup> As “servants of the royal chamber,” they were directly subordinate to the emperor, whereas the majority of the population was subordinate to lower-ranking lords. They were—as Baron’s student Yerushalmi once expressed it in the words of a medieval writer—“servants of kings,” whereas their Christian neighbors usually remained “servants of servants.”<sup>8</sup> Like Dubnow, Baron emphasizes the importance of the Jews’ autonomy, which necessarily disappeared when emancipation came. Baron considers even the ghetto chiefly from a positive perspective, as being originally an institution “that the Jews had found it to their interest,” in order to be able to live together and when necessary defend themselves against their enemies. In most cases “there were locks inside the Ghetto gates before there were locks outside.” For Baron, the ghetto represented a substitute for the Jews’ lost territoriality: “The Jew,

indeed, had in effect a kind of territory and State of his own throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period.”<sup>9</sup>

As if that were not enough, Baron adds that in the preemancipation period, the Jewish population grew significantly faster than it did afterward, that in the Middle Ages Jews were on average more prosperous than their non-Jewish neighbors, and that they were exempt from disagreeable duties like military service. In fact, Baron maintains, even anti-Jewish laws that forced Jews to take up trade and money dealing were ultimately to benefit them, because these vocational groups were among the most in demand once early capitalism got under way. Baron sums up: “Compared with these advantages, social exclusion from the Gentile world was hardly a calamity. Indeed, to most Jews it was welcome, and the Ghetto found warm champions in every age. There the Jews might live in comparative peace, interrupted less by pogroms than were peasants by wars, engaged in finance and trade at least as profitable as most urban occupations, free to worship, and subject to the Inquisition only in extreme situations (as after the enforced baptisms in Spain and Portugal). They had no political rights, of course, but except for nobles and clergy no one did.”<sup>10</sup>

All these privileges were annihilated by the modern state, which required the emancipation of the Jews even more than the Jews themselves did. It could no longer tolerate an autonomous Jewish corporate body; disagreeable duties such as military service awaited Jews who became citizens, lost their earlier identity, and now had to be defined in purely denominational terms, like their Christian fellow citizens. This was accompanied by a reinterpretation of their own history that emphasized the misery of the premodern period and made their age look like a new dawn. Now, however, “surely it is time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe, and to adopt a view more in accord with historic truth.”<sup>11</sup>

“Ghetto and Emancipation” was the first of Baron’s essays to reach a broad audience. Nonetheless, in these few pages he managed to include all the important basic theses that he developed in the hundreds of essays and numerous monographs he produced in the course of a career extending over six decades.<sup>12</sup> It is true that here many points are expressed in a somewhat exaggerated and sometimes imprecise way, but all the same, Baron repeatedly defended the views formulated here, and throughout his life they were cited in his campaign against the “lachrymose version of Jewish historiography.”<sup>13</sup> His criticism of his two great predecessors was also shaped chiefly by this view. He identified Graetz directly with

the “history of suffering” that he so vehemently rejected. He reproached Dubnow for encouraging, through a “world history of the Jewish people,” an isolationist point of view. Nevertheless, respect, especially for the great pioneer Graetz, also played a role. Baron found Graetz’s passion and subjectivity unsuitable as a model, but he tried to understand Graetz in the context of his time. “To properly assess Graetz as a historian, one must go back to his time and his environment to find the proper standard of judgment. He cannot be approached with present demands, and in his work, as in that of all his contemporaries, many things that are taken for granted by a contemporary historian will have to be let pass.” Baron wrote this in 1918, when he was twenty-three years old. But he already speaks as the representative of a new, more professional generation that can and must distance itself from Graetz’s polemical attitude: “In every line of his history we hear the beating of the heart that grieves over the sufferings of his people and rejoices in describing the few happy periods. This subjectivity, from which later Jewish historiography was not able to free itself to the required extent, is a weak point in Graetz as a historian, but one of the strongest aspects of Graetz as a writer. In the age of battle, when the goal was to found a new discipline and to win for it the souls of already partly alienated contemporaries, this subjectivity was far more helpful than it was damaging.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the young Baron’s respect for the great names in Jewish historiography, his critical attitude remains predominant. Calling Graetz’s historical writing subjective was certainly not praise, and Graetz himself would probably not have seen it as such. More than that, Baron thought later historians were also marred by this defect, from which only his own generation was beginning to free itself. Baron’s way of writing history also differed sharply from the fluently written chronological narrative of his predecessors. In his eighteen-volume work, Baron went deep, often without concern about how this would affect the flow of reading.

Chaim Raphael summarized Baron’s mode of writing this way: “The reader of Baron’s multivolume *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* is not concerned with what happened next. He is absorbed on every page—and even more so in the notes—with the realities of daily existence. The play of ideas and the richness of documentation bring the Jews to life in their time and place with no pattern imposed on how it will all end, or indeed what it might all mean.”<sup>15</sup>

What led Baron—in contrast to his two great predecessors, Graetz and Dubnow, as well as his Zionist-minded contemporaries—to such a radically new interpretation of Jewish history, to a kind of history that runs

counter to those that had been usual up to that point? Like those of his predecessors, Baron's interpretation of history can be understood only in relation to his biography. Although he grew up in Galicia and was shaped by eastern European Judaism, he was anything but a typical shtetl Jew. His family was among the most prosperous in Tarnow, his father was for many years the president of the local Jewish community, and Baron grew up with several different languages and worldly knowledge. Having studied in Vienna and taught in the United States, first at the Jewish Institute for Religion and then at Columbia, he was in no sense an academic outsider. Baron did not have to contend with all the problems that had been faced by Jewish historians of earlier generations, from Zunz through Jost and Graetz down to Dubnow.

This personal freedom was connected with a new, liberating point of view on Jewish history. Baron could not seek to act on behalf of emancipation, since it had long since been achieved, or for national autonomy, which was connected with the Old World that he had left behind. Nor did Zionism, of which he approved in principle, shape his worldview. Instead, the latter was shaped by an individual liberalism of the Western type that defined Jews as actors in world history who controlled a significant part of their destiny. Therefore, according to Baron's biographer, Robert Liberles, his primary goal was the "normalization of Jewish history."<sup>16</sup>

In Baron's work, as a counterposition to the Zionists (who also sought to normalize the status of Jews, but on the basis of a Jewish state), we find a rosy view of the diaspora that corresponds to his own biography. There is no negative image of exile, of *Galut*, to which the longed-for return to the lost homeland is opposed.<sup>17</sup> Not the Land of Israel but rather the people of Israel and the Jewish religion are central to his history. Jewish creativity, Baron emphasizes over and over, is in no way connected with a territory. He underlined this by referring not only to the well-known achievements in the diaspora from the Babylonian Talmud through the Spanish kabbalah to the Western Enlightenment but also by stressing the Bible's cultural influence outside Palestine:

A most remarkable thing happened, as in the days of the Judges, the people of Palestine now had to live by a law formulated outside their own country. It is immaterial whether it was the whole Pentateuch in its then known form, or only the so-called Priestly Code that Ezra submitted to the people gathered in Jerusalem. It was apparently brought with him from Babylonia. To be sure, it



drew on the rich centuries-old mines of Palestinian judicial and priestly lore. It was also in many ways a child of the spirit of the Palestinian prophets. But the emphasis, the lights and the shadows, the whole tone, as well as many detailed extensions, were Babylonian. The elevation of the law to a supreme position in the Jewish religion, the extreme accentuations of the ritual, the laws of purity and those concerning food, and even the exalted appreciation of the priesthood and sacrifices reflected mainly exilic conditions and ideals.<sup>18</sup>

In opposition to Zionist interpretations, Baron maintained that in biblical times, the Jews had never ruled over the whole of Canaan, nor had any homogeneous Jewish population ever settled there. Moreover, in light of the thousand-year-long history of the Jews, their residence in the Land of Israel was relatively short. On the other hand, they settled outside their own land quite early (from the eighth century BC on).<sup>19</sup>

Yitzhak Fritz Baer (1888–1980), the most important representative of Zionist historiography of Baron's generation, was well aware of the challenge contained in Baron's conception of history.<sup>20</sup> When Baron's first general account of Jewish history in three volumes appeared in the late 1930s, Baer, then the leading historian at the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem, rejected his views on almost every point in a twenty-three-page review. What was most important for Baer, as for most historians from Jerusalem, was fundamentally challenging the idea that there was a harmonious relationship between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>21</sup>

From a Zionist point of view, Baron had idealized the relationships between Jews and their environment. For Baer, it was undeniable that "despite everything the irreversible fact remains that Jewish history in the Middle Ages [was characterized by] an uninterrupted series of persecutions."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in his view "Baron does not understand the crucial religious importance in the great war between Judaism and Christianity." For Baer, this conflict has decisively shaped the face of Judaism for centuries, and it would be a great misunderstanding to see it as simply a "natural relationship between two medieval phenomena."<sup>23</sup> From Baron's universalist point of view, it was the Jewish contributions to civilization that were most important, whereas Baer's more particularist view made the fate of the Jewish community central.

For Isaac Barzilay, Baron's and Baer's differing perspectives on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity could also be traced back to their differing personal circumstances: "It must have been this sense

of security in Jewish Jerusalem that gave [Baer] the sense of freedom to speak his mind so intrepidly. Contrariwise, it may have been Baron's awareness of his academic Christian environment that may have had an opposite effect on his view."<sup>24</sup>

Despite Baer's explicit and detailed criticism, the two men remained on friendly terms. In his memoirs Baron wrote that regardless of their different approaches, he had learned most from Baer: "His strong objections to some of my views were taken by many readers as denigrations, whereas I considered them as mere statements of differing approaches.... I did not call Baer an antagonist, but rather a teacher who by stating his contrary views, induced me to rethink some of these problems." At a meeting of the World Union of Jewish Studies held many years afterward, Baron praised Baer as "one of the greatest Jewish historians and not only in our time." And it seems that later on, Baer, thinking of his negative review of Baron's *Social and Religious History*, regretted what he called "the sins of my youth."<sup>25</sup>

In 1882, one of the first modern Zionist thinkers, the Russian physician Leon Pinsker, wrote a memorandum calling on Jews to undertake their "self-emancipation," by which he meant a "return" to the Land of Israel. The call for self-emancipation was long to remain the Zionist answer to the bourgeois emancipation of the nineteenth century. Baron, in contrast, saw the true self-emancipation of the Jews in exactly the opposite way: "Gradually, the nation emancipated itself from state and territory. As the Jewish religion developed away from any particular locality, the Jewish people—and this certainly was a contributory cause of the former development—also detached itself more and more from the soil."<sup>26</sup> Like Dubnow, Baron found in the Jewish community organization, on which he wrote his own long monograph, the substitute for the missing state, but he went much further in his positive overall assessment of preemancipation history.<sup>27</sup>

Baron and Dubnow judged the French Revolution differently. In a generally positive review of the first edition of Baron's *Social and Religious History*, published in 1937, Dubnow firmly rejected Baron's periodization. He defended his own decision to make the modern period in Jewish history begin with the French Revolution, and not, as Baron proposed, with the Dutch and Italian Haskala. For Dubnow, the boundaries of an epoch had to coincide with a change that affected the whole people, and not only intellectual elites. Here the aging Dubnow asserted for the last time his "sociological" perspective in opposition to his young colleague and his perspective based on the history of religion.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas Dubnow saw a new, better age dawning with the French Revolution, Baron associated the latter with the dangers of modernity, to whose most horrible form both his own parents and Dubnow had fallen victim. The experience of the Holocaust did not fundamentally alter Baron's interpretation of history. Liberles observes that in numerous statements made before and during the Second World War, Baron erred in his assessments of developments in Nazi Europe and offered far too optimistic prognoses for the future.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, we must note that Baron's theories provided a more satisfactory explanation of the novel nature of modern antisemitism than those of adherents to an eternal history of persecution. Baron had always warned against glorifying modernity, the age of emancipation, and its consequences. Thus, he was probably one of the first historians to realize that the Shoah was not a continuation of the medieval hatred for Jews but rather a completely new chapter in the history of persecution that was to be explained not so much by the history of antisemitism as by the modern world of nation-states and their problems. In 1935 he had already made this difference clear: "The Nazi attempt, consequently, to place the non-Aryans ... outside of the pale of a united Germany citizenry is not a reerection of the medieval legal structure, but the establishment of a new, unprecedented legal status."<sup>30</sup>

In this connection it is worth mentioning a last aspect of Baron's work. He was the first major historian to undertake a systematic study of Jewish American history. Baron saw North America becoming the new center of Judaism in the twentieth century. Perceiving the increasing threat to the European center, he emphasized the advantages of American voluntarism for Jewish community life as well.<sup>31</sup>

At Columbia, Baron founded the modern tradition of Jewish historical studies anchored in the university. In 1961, he was the first historian called to the witness stand at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and shortly before he had served as the head of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, an organization that sought to recover and redistribute stolen Jewish cultural goods after the end of the war. His most important colleague in this effort was Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), who despite her partial disagreement with Baron's view of Jewish history, became a close friend and lauded his achievements. On the occasion of his seventieth birthday, she wrote, "Even before I met you in this country more than twenty-five years ago, I knew that the Jewish people had finally found its historian.... You had begun to write history in a way no one had ever dared to write it before—not Jost, nor Graetz, nor Dubnow."<sup>32</sup>

Baron was no doubt one of the great Jewish historians. He had numerous students and was widely known. Nevertheless, his view of Jewish history did not become prevalent outside a narrow academic spectrum. It was his tragedy to have sought to oppose the conception of Jewish history as one of suffering precisely at a time that produced more suffering than any earlier period. Whereas he regarded the catastrophe of European Jewry in the twentieth century as a sad confirmation of his theory, according to which modernity had shattered an earlier system that was certainly not ideal but nonetheless stable for the Jewish minority, his critics saw it as justifying their emphasis on the Jewish history of suffering.<sup>33</sup>

### Roth in Oxford: More Than a History of Victims

In the 1920s, the United States became a new center for Jewish studies. In 1925, Harvard established the Littauer Chair, the first chair in this area in a major American university. The first holder of this chair was Harry Austryn Wolfson, whose field was Jewish philosophy. The Institute of Jewish Religion in New York City, founded by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, brought prominent European scholars such as Ismar Elbogen and Julius Guttmann as visiting professors. Scholars like Louis Finkelstein (1895–1992) and Alexander Marx, who came from Germany, taught at the nearby Jewish Theological Seminary. But during the period between the world wars, serious efforts to integrate Jewish history into a general historical curriculum were also made elsewhere. In the very heart of the traditional European academic landscape, at Oxford, Jewish historical studies acquired a firm place in the person of Cecil Roth. Although Roth, despite his high international standing, never received a professorship, as a reader at Oxford he was able to free Jewish historiography from its provincial shroud and make it widely recognized.

In Europe, Roth probably came closest to achieving Baron's status. Given their similar careers, it may not be surprising that there are also discernible similarities in their historiographical interpretations. Roth admired Baron—as he showed, for instance, in a review of Baron's three-volume history of the Jewish community: "Personally I am filled with admiration for Dr. Baron's remarkable learning; I have stated more than once that he is in my opinion the most gifted Jewish historian of our day (there is certainly no other than Fritz Baer, of Jerusalem, who can be compared with him); and I have informed spiteful critics that they are more actuated by jealousy of the author than jealousy in the cause of learning. Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand how a single person, after having produced in 1937 *The Social and Religious History of the*

*Jews*—the work of a lifetime—should be able to produce the work of another lifetime in 1942.”<sup>34</sup>

Even if Roth was a less original and more popularizing historian, his creative powers were hardly less broad and fertile than Baron’s. He published studies on the history of the Jews in the Renaissance and the history of the Jews in England, produced an overview of Jewish art, and served as editor of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in its early stages. Like Baron, he had taken a degree in history, although his inclination toward Jewish history had not been as clearly discernible. Probably even more than Baron, he belonged to two different worlds. He had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish family in London; his father came from Poland, while his mother’s family had lived in Sheffield for several generations.<sup>35</sup> Roth studied at Oxford, where he specialized in Italian history and wrote his dissertation, which was published in 1925 under the title “The Last Florentine Republic, 1527–1530.” His widow described him this way: “He was an English man of letters, in tune with the conservative ways of British academic life, a lover of the English countryside. He was as much at ease in his West End Club as he was with his Catholic colleagues and friends in Italy. At the same time he was a religious Jew, proudly aware of his heritage.”<sup>36</sup>

Roth and Baron first met in New York in 1926, where they both taught for a semester at the Jewish Institute for Religion and quickly became competitors for the permanent position that had been announced there. Despite their increasingly friendly relationship, their competitiveness affected their assessments of each other. Baron recalled that because of his younger colleague’s British appearance, he was at first “a little antagonized, not only by his excessive Oxford diction, but also by a kind of English superior feeling over all continentals.... Despite this involuntary competition with Cecil, he and I remained good friends. We visited each other very frequently on our respective journeys to Palestine and England. We reviewed each other’s publications in a friendly spirit.”<sup>37</sup>

On closer examination, we see that Baron’s and Roth’s reviews of each other’s books were not always as friendly as Baron later wanted to make them appear. In an essay of May 1928 titled “Jewish History for Our Own Needs,” Roth complained that “the right hand of Clio knoweth not what the left is doing.” According to him, “A recent German monograph by the newly-appointed Professor of History in one of the New York theological seminaries upon the Jewish Question at the Congress of Vienna failed to take account of a detailed study of the question which ap-

peared in the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society!”<sup>38</sup> This was clearly a swipe at Baron, who had just been appointed to a professorship at the Jewish Institute of Religion for which Roth had also been a candidate. Roth had earlier complained that as a Jew, he was unable to find a position at an English university, and his anger was now directed against the leading circle in Jewish studies in the United States, which—as he told a friend—was a “mutual admiration society,” a group of scholars that probably knew a great deal about rabbinical texts, “but who have not mastered the elements of the historian’s craft.”<sup>39</sup>

Despite their differences, the competitive situation in which they found themselves, and the differences in mentality between an Eastern European Jew like Baron and the thoroughly British Roth, the two men’s historiographical approaches were similar. It is telling that Roth’s widow gave her memoir about her husband the subtitle *Historian without Tears*. Baron’s rejection of the lachrymose version of Jewish history is in accord with this. Roth himself had already expressed the same view in an essay published in 1932 under the title “The Most Persecuted People?” Like Baron in his essay “Ghetto and Emancipation,” Roth did not set out to challenge the persecutions in the history of the Jews but rather to put them in their historical context.

The modern reader often does not realize that life in the Middle Ages was generally not secure. Even in comparatively peaceful times the probability of a violent death was high for all population groups. The rural population was constantly threatened by the assaults of bandits or lawless rulers, as well as by the attacks and counterattacks of armed forces. City-dwellers generally enjoyed greater security, but in the event of an attack by a hostile army (and what city was impregnable?) their city might be plundered and all its residents killed. The whole history of the Middle Ages and a large part of modern history is full of such examples: the glorious campaigns of Attila the Hun, the “scourge of God,” the devastation of the Vexin by William the Conqueror, or the siege of countless German cities during the Thirty Years’ War. There were often cases in which the majority of the people were mercilessly slaughtered, only a small proportion surviving. This and similar events should be taken into account in reflecting on the fate of any ethnic or religious minority. The blood-red character of the persecution of the Jews does not stand out against a virginally white background, as

if the former represented an exception to the general rule of peace and prosperity. The context is generally dark, and the fate of certain groups was sometimes as tragic that of the Jews.<sup>40</sup>

After giving numerous examples intended to show that Jews have not been the only victims in world history, Roth concludes with an answer to the question as to why the sense of suffering is so strong among Jews:

For the eternity of suffering has its compensations, after all. In the classical period, for example, with its holocausts of heroes, the lot of the Jewish people was much the same as that of the ancient Britons, the Iberians, and the Gauls; and the leaders of those peoples' struggles for freedom deserve to be remembered as much as the Jewish martyrs who are commemorated each year on the ninth of Ab. But this is far from the case. Generally they are forgotten, save by a few industrious antiquarians; and they have no place today in the proud memories of any people. The reason is very plain. The races for which they fought are long since dead. The Jews are still alive. If the latter preserve in their historic consciousness so long and so persistent a memory of martyrdom, it is in its way a tribute to their immemorial antiquity quite as much as to the extent of their sufferings. For Israel, though preeminent, is not alone among the martyr peoples of History.<sup>41</sup>

In the same article in which he reproached Baron for lacking a mastery of the historian's craft, it also becomes clear that Roth is distancing himself methodologically much more clearly from his predecessors in Jewish historiography: from Graetz's "excessive Teutonism" and from what is for him virtually the same thing, Dubnow's reduction of modern Jewish history to eastern Europe. A year later, in the *Menorah Journal*, he criticized the Jerusalem historians for having sought to force the extensive body of Jewish history into the procrustean bed of a perspective centered on Palestine.<sup>42</sup> No doubt Roth rejected all three of these master narratives of Jewish history, and suggested a point of view that gave more attention to the Sephardic, Italian, and Anglo-American experiences. The latter had little in common with a history of suffering like Graetz's, a Hegelian notion of rise and fall like Dubnow's, or a territorial-nationalist perspective like Baer's.

Although Roth himself was a religious Jew and was publicly committed to Zionism, his British socialization and accumulated experiences in the United States played the crucial role in his decision to make the in-

tegration of the Jews and their achievements in the diaspora central. As the object of his investigations he chose not topics in Jewish history that fitted into the classical concept of a history of suffering but rather themes such as the history of the Jews in England: “In this happy land,” he wrote, Jews “have attained a measure of freedom ... which has been the case in scarcely any other.”<sup>43</sup>

Along with Hellenistic antiquity and the golden age in al-Andaluz, the history of Italian Jews during the Renaissance served historians as a model of a positive existence in the diaspora. For Roth in particular, the experience of Italian Jews became a key one for the successful integration of the Jews into their Christian environment. Roth’s *The Jews in the Renaissance* (1959) contains the quintessence of his decades-long concern with Jewish and Italian history, and became a classic. In a work addressed to a general audience, Roth sketches the careers of Jewish Italian dancing teachers, describes—using contemporary rabbinical correspondence—the ball games played by Italian Jews, and discusses theater, literature, and printing. From this emerges a picture of a Jewry that clings to its Judaism while at the same time being a community that is integrated into its environment, a community “in which the scientist was at the same time a talmudist, or the philosopher an exegete.... In Renaissance Italy, we have the unique phenomenon of that successful synthesis which is the unfulfilled hope of many today. The Jews who translated Averroes achieved distinction as physicians, compiled astronomical treatises, wrote plays, directed the theater, composed music and so on, were in almost every case not merely loyal Jews, but intellectually active Jews, conversant with Hebrew, studying its literature and devoted to talmudic scholarship ... the playwright-impresario was at the same time a Hebrew poet who founded a synagogue.”<sup>44</sup>

Roth is clearly thinking of his own time when he speaks of “that successful synthesis which is the unfulfilled hope of many today,” just as his German Jewish predecessors saw the ideal image of their own time in the medieval Jewish golden age in Spain. In an earlier work, *The History of the Jews in Italy* (1946), Roth had described the basic conditions of Jewish life in Italy as harmonious, even if the fine weather was occasionally interrupted by a storm:

For it must be remembered that the Italian’s temperament is no less volatile than versatile. As recent years have demonstrated, he can easily be stirred up to a frenzy by an orator who plays on his sentiment. But these moments of passion cannot last for long, and



when they are passed he reverts to his easygoing, indolent, friendly self. Sometimes, a riot might be caused by the inflammatory flow of rhetoric from the pulpit. But after the wave of feeling had ebbed, and the series of sermons was ended, and the friar had moved on to another city, the frenzy would die down as suddenly as it had risen. The Jew repaired his broken windows, and the needy plebeian again began to bring along his valuables in the hope of raising money, and there would be laughter and singing and perhaps drinking in the streets, and somber ecclesiastics would once again begin to mutter at the excessive cordiality, and it would again be true that in no part of the world did such a feeling of friendliness prevail as in Italy between the people and the Jews.<sup>45</sup>

Roth's account reads almost like a fairy tale in which misfortune is sure to be followed by a happy ending. To most readers encountering it one year after the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, Roth's description of pogroms directed against Jews as minor mishaps in a generally harmonious relationship must have seemed a major provocation. It is hardly surprising, though, that Baron also saw the modern age as beginning with Italian Jewry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that he spoke of an "Italian and Dutch Haskalah."<sup>46</sup>

### From the Salon to the Academy: The Beginnings of Jewish Women's History

The importance of Germany in the field of Jewish studies did not disappear after the First World War. The great Hebrew writer Sh.Y. Agnon once remarked from the point of view of Eastern European Jews that "our knowledge in the realm of Jewish studies is no more than sawdust that has fallen from the tools of the great craftsmen, namely the German Jewish scholars."<sup>47</sup> Shortly after the war the historian of ancient times Eugen Täubler was able to revive, with the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, an important line of research; key reference works such as the *Jüdisches Lexikon* and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* appeared; and the most significant writer on Jewish history of the Weimar period, Ismar Elbogen, began his international project to produce a universal history of the Jewish people. All these developments could not conceal the fact that the centers of Jewish historiography were now located outside Germany. Because of the economic and political crises of the 1920s, Täubler's academy was never able to achieve what was expected of it, the encyclopedias merely followed American and Russian models (the more detailed *Ency-*

*clopaedia Judaica* was never finished because of Nazi rule), and Elbogen's great project fell victim to the 1929 economic crash.<sup>48</sup> Within a few years, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was founded (1925), along with the YIVO, centered in Vilna (1925), and chairs of Jewish studies at Harvard and Columbia universities were established (1925 and 1929).

A new development in the Weimar Republic was the study of Jewish history not only by male but also by female historians. Selma Stern and Hannah Arendt were the most important representatives of this new undertaking, to which other Jewish women such as Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) and Bertha Badt-Strauss (1885–1970) also contributed. They were not by any means concerned solely with the history of women, as is shown by the great work on the Prussian state and Jews by Stern, or by Arendt's first philosophical essays. Nonetheless, they made a crucial contribution by calling attention to important texts on the history of women and presenting them to a broader readership. Their analyses of the emancipation of women were also to serve as wake-up calls for their contemporaries. Thus, it is worthwhile to examine more closely this still-unwritten chapter in Jewish historiography, although—or perhaps precisely because—its representatives do not enjoy the “canonical” status of Graetz, Dubnow, Baron, or Roth.<sup>49</sup>

Pappenheim belonged to a generation of women for whom university study, not to speak of an academic career, was still inconceivable. Nevertheless, in her old age she made a crucial contribution to the knowledge of Jewish women's history by editing and translating classical texts of Jewish women's literature. Pappenheim was above all an activist, a pioneer in social work under the Weimar Republic, and the founder of the *Jüdische Frauenbund*. Only long after her death was she revealed as the “Anna O.” who helped encourage Freud to develop psychoanalysis. Although she was not a learned historian, she edited texts like the *Mayse-Bukh*, with its many Talmudic legends, the first volume (Genesis) of the “Women's Bible,” *Tse'enah u-re'enah*, and the memoirs of Glikl of Hameln from the seventeenth century.<sup>50</sup> By making these texts available to German Jewish women of her own time, she gave access to a buried tradition.

Pappenheim took a scholarly interest in these texts, but her primary interest was in connecting feminism and Orthodoxy, Jewish tradition and European modernity. In Glikl she found not only a distant relative but also a role model for Jewish women.<sup>51</sup> As she emphasized in her foreword, she sought to make it possible for her contemporaries to “sense a revival and reexperiencing of feelings that we otherwise sense only vaguely as tradition.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast to the bourgeois role model, Glikl—along with

countless other Jewish women in the premodern period—was in no way restricted to a private, domestic life. She participated fully in professional life and ran her husband's business after his death.<sup>53</sup> As her diaries show, she was capable of literary activity, even if she could not publish. Although as a child of her time Glikl had only a limited impact, she was able to serve Pappenheim's contemporaries as a model of a woman active in many areas. Pappenheim's critique was aimed at bourgeois social norms as well as those of Orthodox Judaism, to which she felt she belonged despite her unanswered questions. Her identification with Glikl went so far that she had her own portrait made wearing the traditional garb of a German Jewish woman of the seventeenth century.<sup>54</sup>

Pappenheim's translations from the *Mayse-Bukh* and *Tse'edah u-re'edah* won her much praise from the most diverse religious groups and also from scholars. Reviews of her work generally observed that she had hit the tone of the time and also reacquainted German Jewish women with their tradition. Although Pappenheim made no claim to be a scholar for editing the *Mayse-Bukh*, which brings together tales and legends from rabbinical literature, Elbogen's preface lent the book a certain scholarly seriousness. In her foreword, Pappenheim also says that the book could at a minimum "serve scholarship: in the realms of cultural history, folklore studies, linguistics, and not least sociology, as an indication of the important and yet so—humble status of women in Judaism."<sup>55</sup>

Her foreword to the "Women's Bible" *Tse'edah u-re'edah* (literally, "Go and see" [daughters of Zion], often called in Yiddish "Tsenne renne") met with firm rejection among conservative groups; she was not sparing in her criticism of the traditionally subordinate role of women in Judaism, and complained that they were not allowed to develop their abilities "beyond the intellectually narrow bounds within which [they are] kept by men." Her feminist interpretation of the Bible is made clear when she notes that it is "also logical ... that this women's book, of which the first volume, Bereishit [Genesis], now appears in a version prepared by a woman and published by the *Jüdische Frauenbund* [Jewish Women's Association]."<sup>56</sup>

Bertha Badt (later Badt-Strauss) grew up in Breslau, in an upper-middle-class Orthodox environment not unlike Pappenheim's. She was the first woman to receive a doctoral degree from Breslau's Friedrich Wilhelm University, in 1908.<sup>57</sup> Her dissertation on Annette von Droste-Hülstorf had no explicitly Jewish theme. Later, biographies of Jewish women became central to her historical and literary work. In 1912 she published an edition of letters and documents on Rahel Varnhagen, and

in the late 1920s she did further research on Varnhagen and other women of Jewish ancestry who founded salons.<sup>58</sup> In addition to her translations and editions of Jewish texts—for example, by the Catalan philosopher and grammarian Profiat Duran (early fifteenth century) or the Italian rabbi Leone da Modena (seventeenth century), she continued to give attention to the works and careers of Jewish women as well. She wrote a series of scholarly articles about Jewish women for the most important Jewish encyclopedias in the German language.<sup>59</sup>

In an article published in the periodical *Menorah* in 1931, Badt-Strauss dealt systematically with the history of Jewish women. This essay was originally intended to serve as the introduction to Pappenheim's *Tse'edah u-re'edah*, but did not appear there because of the two authors' different assessments of the role of the Jewish woman. Whereas Pappenheim firmly rejected the traditional woman's role in Judaism, Badt-Strauss, who adhered to Orthodoxy and Zionism, in theory approved of that role. Later on, Badt-Strauss criticized the bitterness regarding alleged discrimination against Jewish women that Pappenheim had expressed in the introduction to the "Women's Bible."<sup>60</sup> Thus, even in the early stages of scholarly work on Jewish women's literature, we can see the first differences in interpretation: whereas traditional Jewish women's literature served a modern woman like Badt-Strauss more or less as a model for her own time, Pappenheim saw it as a reminder that new role models for women had to be developed.

Like Badt-Strauss, Selma Stern was one of the first women in Germany able to get a university education. She grew up in an acculturated family belonging to the rural Jewry in Baden, was the first girl to graduate from a high school in Baden-Baden, and in 1914 became the first woman to complete a doctorate in history in Germany. Her dissertation on Anarcharsis Cloots, a German Jacobin involved in the French Revolution, bears witness to her attempt to empathize with the subjects of her research, and in a historical scholarship dominated by the theme of power politics, this was an early declaration of her role as an outsider. During the war, this was made still clearer by her turn toward the history of women, which was at that time little developed. She began, at least externally still entirely in the spirit of traditional history, with an article on Sophie, the wife of the elector of Hanover.<sup>61</sup> Here we can already discern Stern's interest in the "femme forte," in a woman who thinks independently about politics and religion.<sup>62</sup>

In 1914, Stern wrote in her diary, "Today, women should imitate an ideal different from that of men. They should be aware that they are

themselves a force that can achieve great things in their area. I dream of a con[nection] bet[ween] sci[ence] & literature, belles-lettres & philosophie, sci[ence] & life. I believe I have found the path along which I can proceed: seriously and slowly. Writing biographies of great men and women in hist[ory] & literature.”<sup>63</sup>

By “feeling her way into” the lives and thoughts of great people, Stern wanted to “forget my suffering in theirs.”<sup>64</sup> With this method, which not only focused on a new object of research (up to that point, historians had paid little attention to the biographies of women) but also promised to offer a more empathetic approach than the usual biographies by her male colleagues, Stern succeeded in blazing new paths in research.<sup>65</sup>

Although Stern’s great interest in women’s fates was unusual, her description of typical female and male characteristics did not differ from the usual one in a male-dominated society. In addition, her interest in ruling figures, some of them women, and thus the primacy of political history, still bore the stamp of German historicism, which remained influential into the twentieth century.

Stern turned her attention to the biographies of Jewish women only a few years after the First World War. This gradual transition from general historical observation to a growing interest in Jewish subjects reminds us of the founders of the Association for Jewish Culture and Scholarship. Just as their eyes turned increasingly inward as a result of the Hep-Hep Riots of 1819, so the increasing antisemitism precisely a century later, during and after the First World War, may have led Stern to focus systematically for the first time on the fate of Jewish women. As she wrote in her diary, before the war, her Jewishness played no crucial role. Only through the “Jewish Census” undertaken in the Prussian Army in 1916 and the consequent antisemitism, she continued, was her Jewish consciousness awakened.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, during the First World War her plans to qualify as a university lecturer and undertake an academic career were thwarted.<sup>67</sup> In the years after the war she was appointed to a post in the newly founded Academy for Scholarship on Judaism in Berlin, where she acquired a firm institutional anchorage in the area of Jewish history. A few years later she married Eugen Täubler, the ancient historian and head of the academy. She published a series of articles in 1922 on “The Change in the Type of the Jewish Woman since Emancipation in Germany,” in which she analyzed the identity conflicts of Jewish women from Varnhagen to Else Lasker-Schüler. In 1925 and 1926 Stern produced another series on “The Development of the Type of the German Jewish Woman since the Middle Ages.” Stern’s description of the changes during the pe-

riod of emancipation sounds as if it is also a careful way of distancing herself from assimilation in her own time: “Everything was criticized that had previously been considered inviolable, religion, family, people. People abandoned the old, invisible, severe God and prayed to the milder, smiling gods of the Earth.”<sup>68</sup>

Like Pappenheim and Badt-Strauss, in her works Stern also emphasized the education of women by means of special women’s literature such as the *Tse’edah u-re’edah* or *Mayse-Bukh*.<sup>69</sup> And as Arendt later did, she also devoted a central chapter of her observations to the Jewish woman in the Romantic period.<sup>70</sup> Stern’s biographer rightly stresses the fact that her chief goal was to represent Jewish women as subjects, and not—as had previously been usual in most cases—as objects of history.<sup>71</sup> She put particular weight on her relationship to the present. Stern distinguished between the secure, established generation of 1890 and her own generation, in which the problem of being a woman was increasingly connected with that of being a Jewess. Her awareness of Judaism was shaped less by religion than by ethnicity, and by the struggles with Zionism and antisemitism, Eastern European Jewish literature and psychoanalysis. For Stern, “intensive study of the Jewish past” represented an essential characteristic of the Jewish woman of her time.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, in the first volume of Stern’s three-volume magnum opus, *Der preußische Staat und die Juden* (published in eight parts, 1925–75), we find a far more traditional conception of history. Here Stern speaks for the optimistic line of scholarship on Judaism, which rejoices in emancipation. Antisemitism, which she examines still more closely in her own study on *Jud Süß*, is seen as merely a temporary disturbance of the advancing process of assimilation and integration. Stern interprets her own time as the provisional high point of German Jewry’s striving for integration.

In interpreting the history of the Jews in Prussia during the early modern period, Stern draws less on the tradition of Jewish historians like Jost and Graetz than on the sources of German historicism. This is evident in the title of her work, which mentions the Prussian state first and then the Jews. In her introductory remarks, she wonders whether it will not seem foolish “to establish relationships between the narrow Judengasse near the Berlin town hall and that bold horseman on the bridge in front of the castle on the Spree who, passionate and imperious, is full of the sense of his power, all will and act, and ready to take the world by storm?”<sup>73</sup> The answer that she gives in the following pages is in fact supposed to be based on these contradictions. She is chiefly interested in the center of

power in the castle, and less in the everyday life in the Judengasse. In this book, the state is the actor, while the Jews are the object.

In contrast to Stern, Hannah Arendt, who was close to Zionism, explicitly criticized the German Jews' history of emancipation. To be sure, her concern with Jewish history also became central only by way of detours. After her early general philosophical works, such as the dissertation on "The Concept of Love in Augustine" written under the direction of Karl Jaspers, she published her first essays on Jewish history in the last years of the Weimar Republic.<sup>74</sup>

In her essay "Aufklärung und Judenfrage" ("Enlightenment and the Jewish Question") she refers to the dialectic of Enlightenment, as had Baron in "Ghetto and Emancipation" a few years earlier. Arendt seeks to show that especially since Herder, Jews have been deprived of their own past. But if these "people without a history" (*Geschichtslosen*) want to become part of European society, they must appropriate an alien past. Education thus becomes the means of integration: education through "foreign" history, however, is bound up with the sacrifice of their own culture.<sup>75</sup> In contrast to Baron, Arendt was not worried about the political dangers connected with the Enlightenment and emancipation. But like him she emphasized, in opposition to most German Jewish historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the negative side of the Jews' "emancipation contract," according to which they were not only to receive equal rights but also had to give up a large part of their identity. A little later she explained this conflict in detail by using the example of Rahel Varnhagen's fate.

Although it was completed after she left Germany, Arendt's biography of Rahel, the early nineteenth-century Berlin salonière, was conceived and largely written before 1933. Here for the first time was an important biography of a Jewish woman written by a Jewish woman author. There has been much speculation as to how far this biography reflects Arendt's own situation as a Jewish woman living in Germany at the beginning of the 1930s. Since the book first appeared in 1957 (and in English), we do not know what she would have written in a foreword more than two decades earlier. But in 1957 at least, she left no doubt as to her identification with Rahel: "It was never my intention to write a book *about* Rahel.... What interested me solely was to narrate Rahel's life as she herself might have told it."<sup>76</sup> In the final chapter, written in exile in France in 1938, Arendt, with her fundamentally pessimistic view of German Jewish emancipation, had already announced a new era in scholarship on Judaism: "There is no assimilation if one merely gives up one's own past but

is ignorant of the alien past. In a society that is on the whole hostile to Jews ... one can only assimilate if one assimilates to antisemitism. If one wants to become a normal person as meticulous as all the others, then there is hardly any choice other than to exchange one's old prejudices for new ones. If one does not do this, then one unwittingly becomes a rebel ... —and remains a Jew. But if one really assimilates with all the consequences of the denial of one's own origin and the bond of solidarity with those who have not done so, or have not yet done so, then one becomes a scoundrel."<sup>77</sup>

Arendt's article on the problematics of assimilation, which was published at the beginning of 1933 and used the example of a group of German Jewish women during the Romantic period, allows us to presume that these reflections were her basic views even before she emigrated. Here too, she was hard on the idea that German Jews could have adapted to any of the prevalent trends of thought; instead, their "assimilation [meant] assimilation to [the] Enlightenment."<sup>78</sup>

Had Arendt still been qualified to be a university lecturer in Germany, as the brilliant student and follower of Martin Heidegger and Jaspers she would have had, at least in theory, prospects of a professorship. As a woman and a Jew, however, this would have been unlikely even in the Weimar Republic; we have only to remember that Elbogen and his colleagues in scholarship on Judaism did not succeed in moving beyond the narrow framework of a rabbinical seminary. Although since the mid-nineteenth century representatives of scholarship on Judaism from Zunz to Graetz had constantly fought to establish Jewish history or theology in a German university, they had failed to do so even under the Weimar Republic. Apart from a lectureship at the University of Frankfurt held for years by Buber, and a few specialists in the area of rabbinical Judaism, most of whom were attached to theological departments, there was no breakthrough in this regard.<sup>79</sup>

The studies by the women discussed here pointed to a new direction for research on Jewish history. Examining the fate of various Jewish women, they expressed a novel critique of the assimilation of German Jewry. At the same time it was precisely these women historians—each in her own way—who embedded Jewish history more firmly in a social context. They were complemented by women active in literature and art history such as Eva Reichmann and Rachel Wischnitzer, and by Regine Jonas, who had been educated during the Weimar Republic and in 1935 became the first ordained woman rabbi.<sup>80</sup> They embodied, in the domain of historiography, the self-awareness of the "new woman" of the



Weimar Republic, which also had its parallel in Eastern Europe. There were quite a few women active among the “young historians” around Ringelblum and Mahler, at the YIVO and the Institute for Judaic Studies. These women were pursuing careers as scholars or teachers in the newly founded Jewish high schools. Some of them had earned doctorates in history and published in the journal *Yunger historiker*. Shortly before the war, they were visited by a young American historian, Lucy Dawidowicz, who began her research at the YIVO and later became a professor of history in New York. Dawidowicz was able to return to the United States in time, but most Polish Jewish women historians, like their male counterparts, fell victim to the Nazi genocide.<sup>81</sup>

### The Return of Tears: Jewish History versus the History of the “Jewish Question”

One year after Hitler’s accession to power, three massive volumes were completed that can be considered the scholarly legacy of German Judaism. The second part of the *Germania Judaica* documented in detail the presence of Jews in countless places in the Reich from its beginning up to 1250, and its foreword reflected the pernicious ideology of the time: “Regarding the continuation nothing can at present be said. We hope that we will be able to pursue our work in more favorable times, but at the moment it exceeds the society’s capabilities.”<sup>82</sup>

A second work completed in 1934, *Juden im deutschen Kulturbereich* (Jews in the German Cultural Realm), was also concerned with German Jews putting down roots in their homeland. In more than fifty articles in this work of over a thousand pages, editor Siegmund Kaznelson documented Jewish participation in German cultural activity, from theater and film to geophysics and botany. There was even an article about “German Jews in Chess.” In 1934, a more appropriate title for this article would probably have been “Jews in German Chess.” Nonetheless, reminding “Aryan” Germans of Jews’ contributions to German culture and how long they had been rooted in Germany was not in accord with the new government’s goals. So it is hardly surprising that the government prevented the book from being printed and distributed. The state police headquarters for the Berlin district had this lapidary comment on Kaznelson’s work: “In reading this book, the unprejudiced reader must conclude that the whole of German culture before the National Socialist Revolution was produced by Jews alone.”<sup>83</sup> Both works reached their readers only decades later: *Juden im deutschen Kulturbereich* in 1959 and *Germania Judaica* in 1963.

A third book, Elbogen's *Die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*, was printed in 1935, and reedited after the war, in a significantly revised form, by Eleonore Sterling. In a biographical sketch of Elbogen, Michael Meyer emphasizes that the otherwise so distant Elbogen wrote this work with a passion reminiscent of Graetz that was to provide consolation and support for German Jews in hard times: "German Jewish history assumes the form of a drama in which there are heroes and villains, and in which dramatic effect is increased by the frequent use of language in the present tense. In contrast to his writing elsewhere, Elbogen here allows himself the liberty to imagine what his characters might have thought or felt. At times the writing resembles that of a Greek tragedy in which later outcomes are foreshadowed by earlier events. Although the Jews are defined as a community of fate, Jewish survival is possible through collective acts of will."<sup>84</sup>

It is also remarkable that in this book—as in Philippson's general account that appeared twenty years earlier—the history of the German Empire is limited largely to the growth of antisemitism, which is subjected to blunt criticism despite the fact that the book was published in Nazi Germany. Elbogen's account ends with the First World War, but he leaves no doubt as to the situation of German Jews in 1935: "The Jewish communities' welfare allocations, which are dramatically increasing and reflect grinding poverty, indicate the situation of those who have remained in the homeland. Not to mention the mental suffering!"<sup>85</sup>

Elbogen's last work was published posthumously in the United States, in an English translation, in 1944. It was an attempt to continue Graetz's history into the twentieth century, and was titled *A Century of Jewish Life*. Under the impact of Nazi persecution, Elbogen reinterprets the periodization of recent Jewish history: he sees the years from 1848 to 1880 as the period of optimism, idealism, and liberalism, followed by the period of pessimism, materialism, and nationalism between 1880 and 1914; finally, beginning with the First World War, comes the period of destruction (from 1914 to 1939).<sup>86</sup> The teleological interpretation of Jewish history adopted by nineteenth-century historians who saw the age of the Enlightenment and emancipation as the end of a long history of suffering is here inverted by the most important representative of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the early twentieth century. The historian now weeps above all for the present.

These great works conclude an era in German Jewish creativity by putting German Jews' spiritual rootedness and their contributions to European civilization in the foreground. In so doing they position them-

selves outside their own time, in which a new paradigm of German Jewish historiography was becoming increasingly dominant: the critique of assimilation. How should this last resurgence of Jewish historiography in Nazi Germany be situated with respect to the overall picture of Jewish historiography? First we must note that a few of the most important works on German Jewish history, even though they were conceived and begun before 1933, were completed after 1933, and breathe a spirit that was already discernible in the Weimar years and became dominant in a rapidly deteriorating climate of intolerance and exclusion. Criticism of the Enlightenment and individual emancipation went hand in hand with a new interest in collective efforts to attain autonomy. Thus, these texts are valuable as both historical and historiographical documents. On the one hand, they are part of the tradition of scholarship on Judaism, and on the other hand, they reflect the new intellectual trends that emerged toward the end of the Weimar Republic. However, at the same time they also began to raise a question that historians asked more often and under different conditions after 1945: Why did emancipation and assimilation fail in the case of German Jews?

It is a little-known fact that until 1938, Jews were able to take doctoral degrees in German universities, and that Jewish research institutions continued to exist until 1939 (in the case of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums even until 1941).<sup>87</sup> In the dissertations and research reports that were produced around 1933 and afterward, Dubnow's concept of autonomy, which had hitherto been applied only to Eastern Europe, suddenly appeared relevant for German Jewish communities as well.<sup>88</sup> For example, a 1935 dissertation focused on legal protection for Jews in German Upper Silesia after the 1922 Geneva Agreement.<sup>89</sup> In particular, the legal historian Kurt Stillschweig (1905–55) wrote numerous articles on the question of national minorities, which were suddenly no longer discussed in a purely theoretical domain. When his articles were published in the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* in 1937 and 1938, retreating to national autonomy already seemed an excessively optimistic future prospect for German Jews. Exclusion was a reality, while it had steadily become more difficult for German Jews to develop their own culture. In his last article, Stillschweig had to sign with "Israel" as his second name.

The *Monatsschrift* of 1939 was the last result of collective Jewish creativity in Nazi Germany. To be sure, it reached only a few readers when after long delays it was finally delivered in 1941 to its last faithful subscribers.<sup>90</sup> Selma Stern's contribution fell victim to the censors. In

her article, she emphasized the dual world in which German Jews lived, their rootedness in both Jewish and German cultures.<sup>91</sup> Stern ended her article with a reference to the great hopes of Jews of the generation that preceded her. They lived in a “time in which, along with the decline of the Romantic movement and the victory of the liberal view, the mood of hostility toward Jews also waned, and they could imagine that their suffering had finally come to an end.”<sup>92</sup> Stern no longer needed to show her readers how much these hopes had been dashed.

Other historians now looked on the once unanimously celebrated age of emancipation with a jaundiced eye. Two pioneering studies based on this new conception were Max Wiener’s 1933 book, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation* (Jewish Religion in the Age of Emancipation) and the Frankfurt dissertation written in 1934 by the social historian Jakob Katz (1904–98), who later became a prominent professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, *Die Entstehung der Judenassimilation in Deutschland und deren Ideologie* (The Origins of the Jews’ Assimilation in Germany and Its Ideology).<sup>93</sup>

As a young man, Katz came from Hungary to study at the Frankfurt yeshiva founded by the Orthodox rabbi Salomon Breuer in 1890. Without completely turning his back on religious life, he devoted himself to academic studies and became a student of the sociologist Karl Mannheim, who also came from Hungary, and who, as a Jew, was no longer allowed to examine Katz. Katz was now left with supervisors who were not experts on his subject. His new dissertation director, Georg Küntzel, a German nationalist though not a Nazi, insisted—as Katz remembered—that “I write a preface to the effect that my scholarly treatment of the subject did not imply that the author regarded assimilation as the solution to the Jewish question.” Küntzel need not have worried that Katz would become an advocate for emancipation, because, as Katz said, “I grasped his point totally and immediately and merely remarked that anyone who read the work would see that my conclusions were scarcely a recommendation for assimilation.”<sup>94</sup> In fact, in the foreword to the 1934 work we read, “The investigation had its origin in the need to look into the causes of a historical event whose effects obviously extend into the current time, and which the author condemned from an extra-scholarly standpoint. The historical turning point in 1933 gave the scholarly question a greater meaning; not only because the object acquired an unexpected degree of topicality, but also because it produced the visible end of a period whose beginnings were to be investigated and thus made it possible to frame the question in a much more acute way.”<sup>95</sup>

Lending expression to the spirit of his time, Katz concluded his dissertation on a pessimistic note. In particular, he pointed to the resistance to assimilation that had grown over time: “Thus a new age arose that no longer wanted to see in assimilation the certainly to be expected solution to its underlying questions.”<sup>96</sup> If we consider Katz’s adherence to Zionism, his skepticism with regard to the assimilation of the German Jews may not seem so strange.

What seems more surprising, on the other hand, is the growing distance taken by Liberal Jewish thinkers with regard to the values of individualism and rational thought. Already in the Weimar period a slow turning away from the rationalist heritage of the nineteenth century was discernible—for example, in the speeches given by leading representatives of Liberal Judaism at the annual rabbinical conferences. Among them was Max Wiener, who had once been Baeck’s assistant in Düsseldorf and after a brief residence in Stettin became Baeck’s colleague in Berlin. Whereas Baeck still oscillated between the traditional rationalism of Liberal Judaism and nonrationalist movements, Wiener’s break with the heritage of the nineteenth century was radical. As his biographer, Robert S. Schine, noted, Wiener’s “historical-metaphysical irrationalism” represented an assimilation of Romantic nationalism to Liberal Judaism.<sup>97</sup> This reevaluation of German Jewish religious history was further strengthened by the events of 1933. With his important work, Wiener expressed the same skepticism in a theological regard that the historian Katz urged in relation to the history of assimilation. Here too, present developments unmistakably shaped the conception of history.

The articles published after 1933 in the leading German Jewish historical journal, the *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* (*ZGJD*), also gave increasing attention to emancipation and its failure.<sup>98</sup> The *ZGJD* was also the forum for the publication of one of the dirtiest attacks on Jewish historiography after 1933. The main actor in this controversy was Wilhelm Grau, a young historian at the Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des Neuen Deutschland (Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany) in Munich. His dissertation was on the Jewish community in Regensburg during the Middle Ages, and in it he aggressively attacked and at the same time plagiarized the work of the Jewish historian Raphael Straus, the former editor of the *ZGJD*.<sup>99</sup> Interestingly enough, a Jewish historian who had emigrated to Palestine in 1935 was still allowed an opportunity to express, in a German Jewish periodical, his great indignation with regard to a rising star on the horizon of Nazi historians: “The reasons why Grau’s work so completely fails are indicated from

the outset. The young author, a doctoral candidate at the University of Munich, was lamentably inadequate to his task."<sup>100</sup> In his reply, Grau denied that any Jewish historian had the necessary objectivity required to approach Jewish history. The *ZGJD* was forced to print Grau's words: "Jewish historiography has to resign itself to the fact that German scholars are and will be systematically researching and describing the Jewish problem, precisely in the framework of German national history. In Jewish circles people have to realize that we Germans do not want to write the history of Jews or Judaism, but rather the history of the Jewish question. We will carry out this task in accord with the German scientific spirit and German thoroughness, on the basis of our own conscience."<sup>101</sup>

In the coming years, "German thoroughness" was to have far more tragic consequences in domains other than science and scholarship. While the exclusion, persecution, and ultimately annihilation of the Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe resulted in a growing number of victims, scientists provided state offices with information. Research on the Jewish question was carried on under government auspices at the most diverse sites and institutes in Germany. Jews were of course no longer among the authors of this research.<sup>102</sup>

In addition to the Munich institute, two similar institutions opened in Frankfurt and Berlin. During the war further institutes on this subject were set up throughout Europe, from Ancona to Kraków, from Bordeaux to Budapest. Nazi research on the Jewish question had clear ideological tasks. Its representatives wanted to establish the differences between the Jewish "parasites" and the respective "host nations," to use their terminology. "Racial mixing" was supposed to be shown as harmful, and emancipation as wrong. Thus without being explicitly called on to engage in mass murder, scientists helped prepare and approve it ideologically. The new discipline of the "Research on the Jewish Question" legitimated the legal exclusion of Jews and later the confiscation of Jewish property. In the course of the Nazi policy of annihilating the Jews, historical studies became further involved, as Patricia von Papen-Bodek has shown in the case of the Budapest Institute: "Its systematic attempt to portray Hungarian Jews as mortal enemies who had to be killed as an act of self-defense was not only an effort to minimize human compassion for the Jews among Hungarians, it was nothing less than instigation to murder. Its vicious propaganda-campaign not only sought to justify expropriation, it legitimized the 'evacuation' of the country's Jews."<sup>103</sup>

The Nazi institutes actively participated in the "Aryanization" of Jewish property, and requisitioned large portions of Jewish libraries from Ath-

ens to Amsterdam, from Vilnius to Rome. They published monographs, bibliographies, and their own professional journals. As in other areas of the Nazi state, there was internal wrangling and competition among the various institutes. In addition, there were personal intrigues and power struggles concerning priority within “Jewish research” that led to legal battles between the leader of the Munich research department, Grau, and his former boss, Walter Frank. Renowned historians often lent their names for at least a nominal participation in Jewish research, as did Karl Alexander von Müller, the leading historian at the University of Munich, who was not only the editor of the *Historische Zeitschrift* but also head of the Munich Institute for Research on the Jewish Question.<sup>104</sup> The real work was done mainly by young, unknown historians who could not get a foothold elsewhere. In the words of Papen-Bodek: “Judenforschung clearly provided a niche for frustrated and unaccomplished opportunistic academics.”<sup>105</sup>

When the Munich Department of Research on the Jewish Question at the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany officially opened in November 1936, Müller stressed in his introductory remarks the special nature of this institution within German academia. After noting that few scholarly and scientific institutes were opened with such prominent representatives in the audience (including Hitler’s deputy, Rudolf Heß), he emphasized that the founding of this institute was more “than an ordinary organizational act of fostering science and scholarship; instead, it is itself an act of revolution, of Adolf Hitler’s great National Socialist Revolution, in the field of knowledge and higher education.” With systematic research on the Jewish question, he said, a “taboo” had been broken that had previously burdened this subject. In the new German state the political task of historical scholarship had acquired a special role: “History shows us that every great revolution worthy of the name has not only transformed the picture of the present, but also that of the past that lay behind it.” For Müller, historical research could forge weapons, provide armor, and train fighters—in short, it could be a “weapons workshop for the battle of the minds.”<sup>106</sup> The new institute immediately announced three well-endowed prizes for research on court Jews, and named as its main areas of research the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the role of the Talmud, the role played by Jews in the Enlightenment, and “statistics on the baptism of Jews and mixed marriages” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—all subjects that could easily be used for purposes of propaganda.<sup>107</sup>

Outwardly, researchers on the Jewish question were intent on making themselves appear to be engaged in objective science and scholarship. They explained that if their conclusions were in accord with the goals of Nazi policies, this was not the result of their prejudices but rather of the fact that Nazi ideology represented the truth, which had been falsified by Jewish historians. However, many readers no doubt noticed that here footnotes served only as an alibi. The antisemitic projections of this research increasingly coincided with the growing tragedy of the European Jews. When in 1943 Grau published a brochure in which he expressed his conviction that by the end of the twentieth century Jews would have disappeared from Europe, the deportation trains were already rolling toward the East.<sup>108</sup>

A few of the historians involved in Nazi research nonetheless gained considerable respect after the war. Their openly antisemitic articles and connection with antisemitic institutes doing research on Jews did not necessarily damage their later careers, and the work they had done there was later published under other auspices in the Federal Republic. Thus, scholars such as Heinrich Schnee and Hermann Kellerbenz did not hesitate to harvest in democratic Germany what they had sown under National Socialism.<sup>109</sup>

It was this atmosphere that made it almost impossible for most German Jewish scholars who had emigrated to return even temporarily to their homeland. No one put this more clearly than Gershom Scholem, writing in 1949 to the historian Hans-Joachim Schoeps, who had just returned to Germany from exile in Sweden: "I am astonished that you can breathe in this air."<sup>110</sup> When in 1963 the historian Werner Conze offered Scholem a guest professorship in Heidelberg, the latter's answer was unambiguous: "It is unthinkable to accept an invitation in this department when my relationship with the nearest neighbors in my scholarly field, such as especially the representative of Hebrew, would be overshadowed by the darkest memories, strained, and collegially unrealizable."<sup>111</sup>

### A Signal in Dark Times: The "Jewish Contribution" to Civilization

Immediately after the war Scholem was involved in the newly founded Commission of European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction. Its main task was to transfer the cultural artifacts that had not been destroyed by the Nazis to new centers of Jewish life, mainly in the United States and Israel. The leader of this organization was Salo Baron, who two decades



earlier had himself personified the transfer of Jewish historiography from Europe to the United States. When after completing his studies in Vienna in the early 1920s Baron considered trying to get an academic post in Central Europe, his teacher Hans Kelsen warned him “not to expect to make an academic career in Austria. Hence I was more pliable to invitations from foreign countries.”<sup>112</sup> At the time, the options offered to him were the newly opened Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the Collegio Rabbinico in Florence, and the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, where he was to begin teaching in 1926. Shortly afterward he received an honorable invitation to join the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, once the academic home of Heinrich Graetz, but he rejected it, as he did not intend to return to Europe. Mindful of the fact that Ismar Elbogen, who had turned down an appointment at Columbia University in 1929, had been forced, like many other respected scholars, to take refuge in the United States after 1933, Baron later commented, “In fact, as we all know, it turned out but a few years later, that had I accepted the invitation, I would have had to RUN to America under much more difficult conditions.”<sup>113</sup>

Elbogen ultimately received help from four different Jewish educational institutions that together managed to pay him an appropriate salary. Eugen Täubler was also to teach at one of these rabbinical seminaries, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. In 1920, Täubler had brought to life the Academy for Scholarship on Judaism in Berlin; after 1933 he worked at the former Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, which had been demoted to the status of an “educational institution” (*Lehranstalt*), and in 1941 he was able to leave Germany at the last minute.

Precisely in the darkest years of Jewish history, as Jews were confronted in large parts of Europe with a return of the racial hatred they thought they had overcome, in Oxford Cecil Roth saw it as his mission to emphasize the Jews’ special contributions to the civilization of humanity. His work *The Jewish Contribution to Western Civilization*, published in 1938, was part of a number of similar publications. In his foreword, Roth asserted that his work was intended to counter the notion “that the Jew is essentially a middleman, who has produced nothing; that he is an alien excrescence on European life.” Despite his clear political goal of combating antisemitism, Roth assured his readers, as had Zunz or Jost a century earlier in their works promoting emancipation, “I have set out to write this book as objectively as possible.”<sup>114</sup> In 1891 David Kaufmann, who taught history at the regional rabbinical school in

Budapest, had already put forward the thesis that scholarship on Judaism should counter the opinion that Jews only sold old trousers and lived by usury.<sup>115</sup> In Germany, both before and during the Nazi period, similar works were being prepared, and shortly after the war this was the chief task of the multivolume standard reference work, *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, published in 1949 by Louis Finkelstein, the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

Finkelstein's work can be seen as the last and most comprehensive effort to point out, as had Kaznelson and Roth, the "contributions" made by Jews to their environment, and to make Judaism as a religious community and civilization accessible for that environment. Finkelstein also wanted to take the wind out of the sails of the antisemites' arguments. Thus in his foreword he wrote, "The purpose of this book is to bring into focus the vast number and wide variety of data concerning Judaism and the Jews, so that they can be seen in relation to one another and to the general phenomena of human culture."<sup>116</sup> And in his prefatory letter to Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, Finkelstein emphasized the central importance of the cross-fertilization of Jewish and the surrounding non-Jewish cultures: "In the course of its long, tortuous history, Judaism has profoundly affected, and been deeply affected by, cultural phenomena covering the whole range of human experience.... The faith and tradition of the Jews have left an indelible stamp on Western music, art, science, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, letters, education, philanthropy, law, public administration, manners, morals, and religion."<sup>117</sup> Thus, the book includes chapters on Jewish contributions to medicine and ethics just as naturally as it does investigations of the influence of the Hebrew Bible on English and European literature. An appendix lists the most commonly asked questions about Jewish history, based on questionnaires filled out by over two hundred scholars and educators. Such questions as these come up: "What is the attitude of Judaism to Jesus?" "What was the Jewish participation in the wars fought by the U.S.A.?" and "What are the contributions of Jews to the cultural development of civilization?"<sup>118</sup>

Not the least goal of this first overview of Jewish history and culture written in the English language was to persuade Judaism's enemies and especially the indifferent: "More complete information about Judaism may perhaps avert, in some degree, the growth of anti-Semitism.... Men who are ignorant are easily misled by those who are vicious; and it becomes the duty of any group which seeks to increase love in the world, to prevent misunderstanding of itself by offering correct information."<sup>119</sup> Finkelstein regarded this work as "the first comprehensive description

of Judaism and the Jews,” and in addition he expressed, in the third edition published in 1960, his conviction that it would be for generations the definitive presentation of Judaism that would need only to be improved and completed from one edition to the next.<sup>120</sup> The authors made their royalties available for this purpose: “All royalties will continue to be earmarked for subsequent improved editions, in hopes that the work may become a classic worthy of its subject and useful to generations yet unborn.”<sup>121</sup>

The American context of the time is obviously important. Not untouched, but nonetheless not directly affected by the Shoah, American Judaism developed in an environment that was on the whole relatively tolerant, but at precisely this point it had to battle a social antisemitism that went so far as to limit the number of Jewish students at American universities. Moreover, in a society shaped by religion and cultural pluralism, Judaism was conceived first of all as a religion and since the 1930s also as a religiously defined culture. Thus, it was only logical that Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983), who propagated this idea more than anyone else, should write one of the central chapters in Finkelstein’s work, “The Contribution of Judaism to World Ethics.” And just as Finkelstein’s conviction that more knowledge could help win the battle against antisemitism could have stemmed directly from the emancipation ideology of Dohm, so David Biale aptly observed, “Kaplan’s essay could easily have been written by Abraham Geiger or Moritz Lazarus in the nineteenth century, so redolent is it of the kind of ethical apologetics one encounters in that literature.”<sup>122</sup>

The first edition of the work was still shaped almost exclusively by American and British historians. Only in the second and third editions was Zionist historiography at least nominally included, in the form of contributions by Dinur and Israel’s president, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Finkelstein’s *The Jews* was published at a time when with few exceptions, there were still no chairs of Jewish studies in American and British universities. Most of the contributors taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which trained rabbis, though some taught at the Orthodox Yeshiva University or Dropsie College. Among the few authors not based at a Jewish college was Cecil Roth, who taught at Oxford.

Like Baron, Roth remained, despite the tragic events he experienced, a lifelong opponent of the lachrymose version of Jewish history. In 1968, when he was once again elected president of the Jewish Historical Society of England, he mentioned the inaugural speech given by his predecessor, Isaiah Berlin, who had cited the reply given by the historian Lewis

Namier when he was asked why he wrote British history rather than Jewish history: “Derby! There *is* no modern Jewish history. There is only a Jewish martyrology, and that is not amusing enough for me.” Berlin seemed to agree, since he went on: “The annals of the Jews between the destruction of the Second Temple and comparatively recent times is indeed largely a story of persecution and martyrdom, weakness and heroism, an unbroken struggle against greater odds than any other human community has ever had to contend with.” Roth had these words in mind when in his own speech he explained why he wrote English Jewish history: “I commend to the young in heart among you my ultimate answer: ‘Because it is fun.’”<sup>123</sup>



Fig. 5.1. Ephraim Moses Lilien, *Passah*. Illustration from *Juda: Gesänge* (Berlin, 1900).

## 5. THE RETURN OF THE NATION TO ITS LAND

### *Zionist Narrative Perspectives*

Our revolution is directed not only against a system but against destiny, against the unique destiny of a unique people.... Our task is to break radically with this dependence and to become masters of our own fate.

—David Ben-Gurion, “The Imperatives  
of the Jewish Revolution,” 1944

IF THERE IS A GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION of Zionism’s message, it can hardly be more clearly communicated than in this drawing by Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874–1925) published in 1900 and titled *Passover*. On the left side of the picture we see the Jew in exile, his eyes sad and his body entangled in thorns; on the right side, we see the rising sun with the Hebrew word “Zion”; and in the background the pyramids of Egyptian slavery. Lilien was the iconographer of the early Zionist movement. He came from Drohobycz in Galicia and was involved in the Jugendstil scene in Munich. Around the turn of the century he became an ardent supporter of Zionism. He made the most famous photographic portrait of Herzl—posing on the balcony of his hotel in Basel—and illustrated picture books and postcards that served to spread the idea of Zionism.<sup>1</sup> Decades after his death, Lilien’s juxtaposition of the Jews’ thorny past in exile with a promising future in a land of their own was still as much a part of the Zionist rhetorical repertory as was Ben-Gurion’s view of what he considered to be the four most important events in Jewish history: the exodus out of Egypt, the handing down of the law on Mount Sinai, Joshua’s conquest of the Land of Israel, and the founding of the State of Israel. In this scheme, the history of the Jewish diaspora is of only secondary importance.<sup>2</sup>

Lilien’s graphic outline of the opposition between exile and homeland, and Ben-Gurion’s political idea of the Jews’ revolution against their own fate, corresponded to the conception of history that had been developed by leading Zionist historians since the end of the nineteenth century. When around this time Zionism became a political movement, its representatives wanted not only to build a new Jewish future but also to rewrite

the Jews' past. *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany and its eastern European pendant, called in Hebrew *hokhmat Israel*, were to be replaced by a reevaluation of the Jews' own past. The Zionists, like all nineteenth-century nationalist movements, assigned a high value to the development of modern nations. Since for over two thousand years another element of nation-building—one that is usually constitutive, namely, a common territory—had been lacking, Zionist historians had to make special efforts to show that Jewish history had evolved in a continuous, homogeneous way in all times and places, and that its bearers had never given up the desire to “return” to their own land. Zionist historians set a radical distance between themselves and earlier representatives of the discipline, although despite these efforts to distinguish themselves from their predecessors it is also clear how much they were influenced by them and that they were able to develop their own positions only in contrast to those already available. This twofold relationship may help explain the vehemence of the conflict.<sup>3</sup>

### The Revolt against the Father: The Break with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

The collision of the new Jewish national consciousness in eastern Europe, which found an important expression in the revival of the Hebrew language, with German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums* took place even before Herzl's appearance and the formation of a political movement. In the mid-nineteenth century, Hebrew periodicals called on Jews to revive their national consciousness and gather in the Land of Israel. Journalists such as Peretz Smolenskin, who edited the Hebrew monthly *ha-shahar*, demanded that Jewish historians identify completely with their subject: Jewish history. In a programmatic essay in the first volume of his periodical, Smolenskin called for research on Jewish history on a new basis. It must be viewed as the history of a nation that could be written only from the inside by a Jewish author who reflected the *Volksggeist* (spirit of the people). Above all, the unifying elements of Jewish history and its special character in contrast to all other national histories were to be made clear.<sup>4</sup>

Polish-born historian Ze'ev Yavetz (1847–1924) published his first historical article in Smolenskin's monthly. In his work, Yavetz combined a traditional religious viewpoint with nationalist ideas about a new settlement in the Land of Israel. Because of its Orthodox orientation, Yavetz's Jewish history in fourteen volumes is exceptional. It is centered on biblical and Talmudic times. Only the last two volumes move beyond those

periods, and even then they describe almost exclusively internal Jewish developments.<sup>5</sup> Yavetz repeatedly emphasizes that he regards non-Jewish sources with skepticism. He claims that he does not want to enter into conflict with the holy scriptures or express his own personal opinion but rather wants only to allow the “national spirit” to speak.<sup>6</sup>

Yavetz has little in common with the nineteenth-century German Jewish historians. Instead he is heavily influenced by traditional religious ideas. Thus he begins his history with the creation of the world, remains true to the biblical account, uses the Jewish calendar years down into the modern period, and interprets the modern antisemitism of the late nineteenth century and the resettlement of the Land of Israel as labor pains connected with the birth of the messianic age. He expressly emphasizes that the Jews’ acts alone influence their fate in the world. In other words, Jews themselves are responsible for the way that non-Jews treat Jews—not the other way around.<sup>7</sup>

Yavetz was neither a modern scholar nor a secular Zionist. He belonged to the early Zionist movement known as Hovevey Zion, and later to the religious Zionist Mizrahi movement. Between 1890 and 1897 he lived in Jerusalem, where he wrote most of his work. For him, the Land of Israel was the center of Jewish history, which he divided into two main periods: *The People of Israel in their Land*” and “*The People of Israel among the Nations*.” In an afterword to the last volume of his work published in 1922 he expressed the hope that a period of “the people of Israel in their land” would now begin again.<sup>8</sup>

Yavetz’s work found only a limited number of readers. The Hebrew language had just become a modern reading language for a few European Jews. Most of them were Orthodox Jews or secular Zionists. For the first group, Yavetz’s work was taboo because of its references to non-Jewish and non-Orthodox Jewish authors. Despite Yavetz’s differences with scholars like Graetz and Geiger, Yitshak Eisik Halevi, the Orthodox author of a multivolume history of the Talmudic and post-Talmudic age (*Dorot ha-rishonim*) reproached him for imitating precisely these authors. On the other hand, the secular Zionists rejected Yavetz because of his basic Orthodox attitude.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the audience for his work was limited to the small group of religious Zionists, and his attempt to write a comprehensive Jewish history from a national religious point of view remained a onetime enterprise.

Yavetz had no important influence on later Zionist historiography. In the early twentieth century, more important ideas came from the young intellectuals within Zionism who were calling for a redefinition



of scholarship on Judaism. This demand could be heard both in Eastern Europe—for instance, in the work of Joseph Klausner (1874–1958)—and the German-speaking context of Central Europe, particularly in the work of Martin Buber. In his first programmatic article, Klausner, who had been since 1903 the editor of *ha-shiloah*, an influential Hebrew periodical founded by Ahad Ha'am, called for a *mada ivrit*, a “Hebrew scholarship.”<sup>10</sup> Russian-born and Heidelberg-trained, Klausner assigned to scholarship a political role in the construction of a Jewish state. He gave particular attention to the periods of the First and Second Temples, when the Jews still had their own statehood. In doing so, he fell back on precisely the Romantic and nationalistic elements of European thought from which the generations of the founders of scholarship on Judaism had distanced themselves.<sup>11</sup>

According to Buber, before a Jewish state could be created, the cultural preconditions for a national identity had to be established. To this end Buber founded a publishing house, the Jüdischer Verlag, called for a national Jewish art, and supported the establishment of a Hebrew university. However, the scholarship to be practiced there was to be founded on bases entirely different from those of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which in his view “did not deserve its great name.” It had become simply a department of philology and neglected practical tasks. The Jewish scholarship that Buber demanded was supposed to give priority to practical tasks: “First of all, to recognize what we love. But then also to investigate, on the basis of the given, what is necessary for our people and what we can expect, our needs and our possibilities.”<sup>12</sup> Like others who were fighting for “cultural Zionism”—among them Lilien, Ahad Ha'am and the later president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann—Buber warned against realizing Herzl's goals by political means alone.

By the time that Klausner and Buber demanded a reorientation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* toward a resolutely Hebrew and Jewish scholarship, the first institutions to achieve these aims had already been established. In 1898 a young Hamburg rabbi, Max Grunwald (1871–1953), had founded the Society for Jewish Folklore, whose journal, *Mitteilungen zur jüdischen Volkskunde*, regularly reported on Jewish popular culture, customs, and superstitions among eastern European Jews, rural Jews in Germany, and Yemenite and Caucasian Jews. By emphasizing these neglected topics, Grunwald and his colleagues gave expression to the altered mood of the turn of the century, which was no longer shaped by the rationalist heritage of the Enlightenment, but rather by the neo-Romantic trends of the time.<sup>13</sup>

Apologetics had not disappeared as an element of Jewish historiography, but it had changed its line of defense. Whereas during the nineteenth century Jewish scholars always assumed that they had to represent Judaism as rationally as possible in order to achieve the goals of emancipation, by the end of the century a new antisemitic stereotype had been established: now Jews were no longer regarded as behind the times, members of a self-isolating group captive to religious superstitions, as the main complaint from Voltaire to Fichte had suggested; instead, they were seen as the leaders of a new urban civilization that was subverting the old values while no longer being externally different from their Christian neighbors.

Jews were excluded from the German nationalist and increasingly racist discourse, but they did not live in a vacuum. They shared the linguistic usages and basic intellectual views of their non-Jewish fellow citizens. Hence, it is hardly surprising that Jewish physicians and anthropologists sought to underpin the discourse on a specifically Jewish race with their own scientific arguments, and simply denied the superiority or inferiority of this or that race.<sup>14</sup> Jewish scientists collected the most precise data on present-day Jews, investigated their demographic structures, and studied their professions and illnesses. The *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* (*Journal for Demography and Statistics of the Jews*) founded by the Office of Jewish Statistics in Berlin in 1905 was the most important forum for those working in this field.

In 1904 Arthur Ruppin (1876–1943), a German Zionist, published *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (*The Jews of To-day*), a work that inaugurated the area of Jewish sociology and for which he was later appointed to the first professorship in this field at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. On the eve of World War I, Ruppin's colleague, the physician Felix Theilhaber (1884–1956), shocked German Jews with his conclusions based on demographic developments, which he published in 1911 under the title *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden* (*The Decline of German Jewry*). Both men believed that their new access to science had provided them with the key to objectivity. Unchallengeable figures and data, statistics and tables, were to replace the subjective viewpoints of the history of ideas. Only a few representatives of this new approach acknowledged that the choice and evaluation of demographic discoveries might be just as ideologically biased. For Ruppin and Theilhaber, it was undeniable that the demographic decline of Jewry could be halted only in a Jewish homeland.

Ruppin begins his analysis with the threatening demographic situation of Jews throughout the world: "The structure of Judaism, once so solid, is

crumbling away before our very eyes. Conversion and intermarriage are thinning the ranks of Jews in every direction, and the loss is the heavier to bear, in that the great decrease in the Jewish birthrate makes it more and more difficult to fill up the gaps in the natural way.”<sup>15</sup> This process was not limited to western Europe but was already discernible even in eastern Europe. Thus the chapters in the first part of Ruppin’s book bear titles such as “The Declining Birthrate,” “The Diminished Importance of Religion,” “Intermarriage,” “Baptism,” and “Antisemitism as an Ineffective Check to Assimilation.” On the other hand, the second part of the book points toward the future, and is called “Jewish Nationalism.” Its chapters are titled “Race Value of the Jews,” “Cultural Value of the Jews,” “Creation of a Self-Contained Jewish Economic Life by a Return to Agriculture,” and “Revival of the Hebrew Language.” It is no wonder that the concluding chapter is titled “Zionism.” Scientific knowledge and political conviction merge in Ruppin, as he himself admits: as a man “to whom the fate of the Jewish people is more than a purely scientific question, I have not been able to refrain from drawing my conclusions from the facts and expressing my views and hopes in relation to the future shape of things.”<sup>16</sup> The book, whose author was soon to emigrate to Palestine and become one of the most important figures in the development of the country, ends on an optimistic note regarding a future for Jews in their own land: “We may confidently hope that the energy and the will to live of the Jewish People will conquer all difficulties, and that the nation will enter in Palestine upon [a] new lease of life.”<sup>17</sup>

Ruppin’s argument resembles that of Theilhaber, who also emphasized that his book was a scientific study whose results suggested concrete courses of action. What prescription does Ruppin write after completing his extensive description of the clinical picture of his patient, the German Jew? “Give [German Jews] Hebrew language and culture, their own customs and laws, and.... Above all, create a healthy national character, possibilities for a normal sex life, economic foundations, in short, reformed from head to foot, become again Jews like in earlier times.”<sup>18</sup> Once again we see here how closely scientific results were connected with concrete political goals. As Mitchell Hart put it, “For many, social science, as part of a reconceived Jewish scholarship, became an instrument with which to challenge the ideology of emancipation.”<sup>19</sup>

In eastern Europe, meanwhile, projects parallel to Grunwald’s emerged. In 1908 leading Jewish intellectuals, including Dubnow, Iuli Gessen, Balaban, and Schiper founded the Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Society in Saint Petersburg, which was a late response to Dubnow’s call in

1891 for the founding of a Jewish historical society and the intellectual groups that resulted from it in Odessa.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, a large number of eastern European Jewish students, who were still prevented by restrictive admission regulations from attending Russian universities, came to Germany and Switzerland for their education.<sup>21</sup> Klausner was one of these, as was his later colleague at the Hebrew University, Dinur, and the later presidents of Israel, Weizmann, and Zalman Rubashov (Shazar, 1889–1974). When at the end of the First World War Rubashov published for the first time important texts by the founders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, he gave them the significant title “*Erstlinge der Entjudung*” (“First Fruits of De-Judaization”), suggesting that these scholars initiated a process through which Jews ceased to be Jews. For Rubashov, Zunz, Gans, Heine, and other members of the Association for the Culture and Scholarship of the Jews made a real effort, but without success: “The de-Judaization was already too profound for inner contemplation to be able to reshape reality.”<sup>22</sup> A few years later the Hebrew national poet Hayim Nahman Bialik spoke, in the foreword to the new Hebrew periodical *Dvir*, which he published and which was devoted to Jewish studies, of the sins of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, whose representatives he thought had seen neither the present nor the future but were only interested in the past.<sup>23</sup>

### Patricide: Scholem’s Metaphorics of Death

When Rubashov lived in the Struck Pension of Berlin toward the end of the First World War he shared this home not only with Eastern European Jews stranded there but also with one native of the city, Gerhard Scholem. As Gershom Scholem he became the twentieth century’s most important representative of Jewish studies and founded the academic study of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the two most radical attacks on *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, he adopted the ideas of Rubashov and others, and gave them a broader audience. Because of Scholem’s central role in the scholarly landscape of Jerusalem and the enormous impact of his attacks, it is worthwhile to examine in greater detail his attempts to distinguish his views from those of an older mode of research and found a new discipline with a different orientation.

The first of Scholem’s two attacks was published in Hebrew in 1944 in the literary yearbook of the newspaper *Ha-arets* under the title “*birburim al hokhmat Israel*” (“Reflections on Scholarship on Judaism”) with the ironically intended subtitle “Foreword to an Anniversary Speech That Will Not Be Delivered.” Twenty years after the foundation of the Institute

of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem—which had become the unchallenged center of Zionist-oriented scholarship—Scholem, who was one of the first members of this institute, directed his criticism at his own craft. In a text that is difficult to translate, and shot through with countless quotations from and allusions to classical Jewish literature, brusque remarks about his predecessors alternate with pointed jibes at his contemporaries and colleagues.

It would certainly be a mistake to overlook Scholem's recognition of the services performed by the first generation of scholarship on Judaism. He had great respect for the founders of the discipline, acknowledged the achievements of people like Zunz and Steinschneider, and above all granted that they had approached the objects of their research without any sentimentality. Yet these giants of scholarship had another side. In this connection, Scholem did not hesitate to use the term *sitra abra* (literally, "other side"), which in Kabbalistic literature since the Zohar had signified evil and other vitriolic expressions: "And then the stage changes, and you see before you giants who, for reasons best known to themselves, have turned themselves into gravediggers and embalmers, and even eulogizers. And now they are disguised as midgets, gathering grasses in the fields of the past, drying them out so that there not remain in them any of the juice of life, and putting them in something which one does not know whether to call a book or a grave... Their books, the classical works of the Science of Judaism, are a kind of procession around the dead."<sup>24</sup>

It seems a little eerie that at just the time of the mass killing in Europe, Scholem repeatedly resorts to the most terrible verbal images of corpses, death, and cemeteries when assessing *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In a later interview, he said that he had written these reflections "in a moment of linguistic fury," but one can hardly avoid thinking that the terrifying reports from Europe that came in daily during summer 1944 must have cast a shadow over Scholem's reflections on the history of scholarship on Judaism.<sup>25</sup> Page after page, he uses the metaphor of death: Steinschneider and his colleagues "labored toward the destruction, celebrating the burial ceremony in thought, speech, and action.... The disembodied spirits ... seek rest, whether in an alien body or in the grave. And many agreed then to remove themselves, turning toward death.... One might say that there is something frightening in the metaphysical platform of the Science of Judaism. Spirits which have been uprooted from their bodies and made abstract wander about in desolation.... The Jew wishes to be freed from himself, and Science of Judaism serves him both as burial ceremony and liberation from the yoke that hovers over him."<sup>26</sup>

This text makes for oppressive reading. The metaphors of death can be only partially explained by the sources of Jewish mysticism. In settling accounts with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Scholem is at the same time settling accounts with German Judaism. Having turned his back on Germany in 1923 and never believed in a German-Jewish “symbiosis,” he considered his position confirmed, though in a dimension of horror never before imagined. The whole of modern German Jewish cultural history, exemplified by *Wissenschaft des Judentums* because of its splendid achievements, was for Scholem no more than an illusion, a unilateral dream that now burst like a soap bubble. For Scholem, it was unquestionable that German Jewish culture had produced exceptionally creative forces, and that this could be made clearer by the example of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Just as in other passages Scholem recognized the literary achievements of Heine, Ludwig Börne, Karl Kraus, and Kurt Tucholsky while at the same time detesting their turn away from Judaism, he also showed great respect for the giants Zunz and Steinschneider—and yet considered them the gravediggers of Judaism. Scholem’s metaphors of death was not without predecessors. Eastern European Zionists had always used this metaphor, particularly the radical Ossias Thon, in his contribution to the *Jewish Almanach* for 1902–3, in which he demanded that contemporary issues in scholarship on Judaism be included: “I have read Graetz’s eleven-volume history and am astonished by it, but I still hear only the lamentations of a splendid funeral oration, while all around are tombstones and the scent of death. It’s enough to suffocate you and freeze you. And that’s Graetz, the liveliest and most warm-blooded of all of them. In his case we can still glimpse a corpse that is not yet completely worm-eaten. But the others scrape up and shovel only bones and bits of bone.”<sup>27</sup>

In Scholem’s words, the magic wand that Romantic philology and philosophy gave to the representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was transformed “into a wrecker’s rod.”<sup>28</sup> Here Scholem expresses an idea that was to cloud the Zionist view of German Judaism for decades: by their tendencies toward assimilation and thus self-destruction, German Jews collaborated in their own decline, and when the day of reckoning came, they found themselves confronting their opponents without any protection. At the same time, Scholem himself became the gravedigger for *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, although he did not prepare a “decent burial” for it, as Moritz Steinschneider had supposedly demanded half a century earlier.<sup>29</sup>

This background is important for understanding Scholem, and readers in Palestine in 1944 were certainly aware of it. Against this backdrop, Scholem pointed out three contradictions that he saw in *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and that were supposed to explain the complexity and dialectic of its founders. First, the demand for an objective, pure scholarship is opposed to the political goal of the emancipation that its representatives pursued in their publications. Second, Scholem sees a striking contradiction between the Enlightenment ideal of the founders of the discipline and their scholarly program, which was shaped by the Romantic orientation of their time. Third, he points to the fundamental contradiction between the constructive tendencies connected with making historical materials available and the destructive tendency to use these materials not to revive but rather to bury Judaism.

Although Scholem shows great respect for the first generation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* because of its enormous academic achievements, and despite its destructive tendencies, he sees in the second generation represented by Graetz and his followers “giants in terms of their knowledge and ... pygmies in terms of insight” who served as the “spokesmen of a certain polite self-satisfaction,” and retreated to “mediocrity” and “morose sentimentality”: “The demonic giant is no more than an innocent fool who follows the practice of a progress-loving citizen, who may be greeted in the city square by any respectable householder, in the tidy marketplace of the nineteenth century.” And still more: “I do not believe that it would be an exaggeration to say that over the course of fifty years (1850–1900) there did not emerge from this circle so much as one authentic, living, nonpetrified word concerning Jewish religion, one that did not stink of the rot of artificiality in its bones and that was not chewed up by the worm of apologetics.”<sup>30</sup>

No representative of Jewish studies ever made such a radical statement regarding the origin and development of the discipline. Scholem’s rebellion was shaped by the opposition to the bourgeoisie so typical of his generation. It would not have been Scholem’s style to analyze only the past. In the second part of his essay his real goal becomes apparent. For him, as for most Zionists, the construction of a Jewish society in Palestine offered his discipline a completely new field of study. The contradictions inherent in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* could finally be resolved in this society because apologetics was necessary only in a non-Jewish environment, and because here Judaism was considered the basis for life and not only for research:

At this point there took place that fundamental change of perspective that accompanied the national movement. We found firm ground on which to stand, a new center from which completely different and new horizons could be seen. We no longer saw our problems from without: neither in terms of dismantling our partial destruction, nor in terms of cowardly and pietistic conservatism, nor in terms of the small-mindedness of an apologetic whose accounts with the past are not smooth. The new slogan was: to see from within, to go from the center to the periphery without hesitation and without looking over one's shoulder! To rebuild the entire structure of knowledge in terms of the historical experience of the Jew who lives among his own people and has no other accounts to make than the perception of the problems, the events and the thoughts according to their true being, in the framework of their historical function within the people.<sup>31</sup>

Like the great Ranke, Scholem implicitly endorsed the belief that historians could depict events and ideas as they really were. But doesn't the return to such a view under the aegis of Zionism involve a contradiction like that found in Immanuel Wolf, one of the founders of the discipline, who demanded that scholarship be pursued as an end in itself, and yet at the same time used it as a vehicle for a political goal? It seems that in this little-noticed passage, Scholem betrays his own contradictions more than in passages where he captures the reader's attention by polemics and vehemence.

Scholem expressly demands "the creation of a completely new image of our history in the broadest sense of the word" and foresees the end of scholarship's destructive powers: "not the washing and embalming of the dead body, but the discovery of its hidden life by removing the masks and curtains that had hidden it, and the misleading inscriptions." He speaks of "the same great and necessary surgery, the dismantling of the dismantling, the removal of the cancer from within the living body of the Science of Judaism."<sup>32</sup>

In this second part of his essay, Scholem makes himself a spokesperson for the kind of new approach to Jewish historiography still represented by his colleagues in Jerusalem, Baer and Dinur. However, although Scholem acknowledges these new goals, he remains skeptical regarding the possibility of achieving them. His disappointment with some of his colleagues in Jerusalem, and especially his fundamental rejection of Klaus-



ner, a nationalist historian of antiquity and literary scholar, made him also have doubts about the present: "But we must admit that we have gotten bogged down on the way from vision to realization. We have not applied the scalpel of criticism to every distorted, grotesque, and offensive feature of the heritage of scholarship on Judaism, whose face we wanted to change. We have set forth programs, but we have been satisfied with commonplaces. In reality, we have in countless details adopted the same way of seeing things that we reviled in our manifestos. We started out as rebels, and now find ourselves successors."<sup>33</sup>

The one-sided view of Jewish history that Scholem criticizes in the founders of his discipline he also finds in his colleagues. Now it is the opposite, nationalistic signs connected with the Land of Israel that characterize research on Jewish history. By using the pronoun "we," is Scholem ultimately including himself in this criticism? Is his essay also an exercise in self-criticism? There are at least some indications that he cannot distinguish the different positions as consistently as he would like to. On May 8, 1945, the day the war ended in Europe, he wrote to his friend Shalom Spiegel, who was then teaching in New York, concerning this essay, saying that he felt relieved, and yet "I have been too brief where more detailed exposition would have been appropriate (I have some bitter accounts to settle with our contemporaries).... And I am really torn between two possibilities: assuming the yoke 'of rebels who turn out to be successors' or revolting against it. And this is the source of great weakness as well as strength."<sup>34</sup>

Some frustration over the fact that the Hebrew University had not been able to attract or at least retain the best faculty members may have been involved in the "bitter accounts with [his] contemporaries" that Scholem had to settle. For example, Spiegel, whom Scholem greatly admired, had left Palestine again in 1929 to become a professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The noted Talmud scholar Saul Lieberman did the same in 1940. And Hannah Arendt, who at precisely this time was passing through France on her way to the United States, had not made it to Jerusalem, despite her Zionist activities in Germany, any more than had Scholem's closest friend, Walter Benjamin. In a letter to Arendt written shortly after the war, Scholem's disappointment can be glimpsed: "And who knows what will become of our university here, if the good people gradually die off ... and the salaries paid here are so poor that we cannot attract even third-rate people from Anglo-Saxon countries. Not to mention stars, whom we always want, and their splendor. At the moment, a full professor here gets, with cost-

of-living supplements, \$3,600 a year. Just think how many thousands of dollars Zionism must be worth to someone for him to come here at the age of forty to fifty. It was easy for us to be idealists and be very happy to get 15 [Palestinian] Pounds a month when we were twenty-five.”<sup>35</sup>

After the war and its horrors began to loom ever more clearly in people’s minds, it seemed to Scholem that among Jewish scholars little remained of the idealism that had brought him to Palestine. As a student, he had already been thinking about a fundamental critique of his predecessors. In his autobiography, he writes that in 1921, he had wanted to write an essay about the “Suicide of Wissenschaft des Judentums” for *Angelus Novus*, a periodical planned by Benjamin that never got off the ground.<sup>36</sup> The fact that he carried out this project at the time when European Jewry was being put to death gives his essay additional drama, but also a certain eeriness.

When a decade and a half after this diatribe in a Hebrew paper Scholem spoke on the same theme before an audience of German Jewish emigrants at the Leo Baeck Institute in London, he approached his subject in a considerably milder way. In retrospect he offered the following excuse: “Now I deeply regret that I had to speak in this way before the Philistines at the Baeck Institute in London.... I behaved more or less like those who, without being Nazis, were willing to write under the Third Reich. The first Hebrew article was addressed to an audience that was capable of thinking in a different way.”<sup>37</sup> This monstrous comparison provides a sense of Scholem’s firm rejection of German Jews who had, as he saw it, reassembled in English exile to celebrate the ideals of an allegedly possible symbiosis.

Even in this watered-down version the basic elements of Scholem’s critique are evident, and only in this form did his concerns become comprehensible for a Western audience. He identifies two tendencies in early scholarship on Judaism that were in conflict with each other: “The one was set upon the liquidation of Judaism as a living organism.... The other was directed toward its transformation.”<sup>38</sup> Apologetics was the ever-recurring reproach that Scholem used to pillory scholarship on Judaism: “Apologetics was the great stimulus in a battle waged against old and new antisemitism, a battle against all kinds of political tendencies, including some within the Jewish community; scholarship was used in furthering such political purposes. The Science of Judaism was a force in this battle—often a decisive weapon—as we can recognize by looking back on it today. Yet at the same time this attitude contained the danger of one-sided concentration of interest on those matters which possessed

apologetic value.”<sup>39</sup> Scholem goes on to note that other areas that did not fit into this picture were simply excluded. Among these were, for instance, Jewish criminals and the whole domain of Jewish mysticism, which Scholem was to make his own special area.

According to Scholem, a real change was achieved only with Zionism: “The new valuations of Zionism brought a breath of fresh air into a house that seemed to have been all too carefully set in order by the nineteenth century. This ventilation was good for us. Within the framework of the rebuilding of Palestine it led to the foundation of centers like the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where Judaic studies, although central, are pursued without any ideological coloring. Everyone is free to say and to teach whatever corresponds to his scholarly opinion without being bound to any religious (or anti-religious) tendency. As a result, great opportunities lay open to treat Jewish sources, the Jewish past, and Jewish spiritual life with new profundity and liveliness.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1959, Scholem’s earlier self-criticism was almost completely absent. He now asserted that his demands were met by the new scholarship emerging in Jerusalem, where one could observe “the production of a completely new picture of our history.” Had Scholem changed his mind about this since 1944, or did he want to conceal his self-doubts from readers outside Israel? Any answer to this question will probably remain speculative. However, the two essays make one thing perfectly clear: for the man who was perhaps the greatest representative of his discipline in the twentieth century, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was far more than an area of academic activity. “His historiographical view derived from his Zionist faith, and perhaps one might say that it was identified with it,” Avraham Shapira noted, also referring to the connection between Scholem’s historical studies and his goals for the future. “Ultimately, in Scholem’s utopian view, the results of philological and historical research provide the sources and materials for the future stages of the development of Judaism.”<sup>41</sup> In this venture, the kabbalah no doubt served Scholem as the source and inspiration for a new, secular strengthening of Judaism in Israel itself.

Scholem—who was otherwise so critical—wanted to see scholarship “without any ideological privileging of one party over another” in his own environment at the Hebrew University. But it was just his closest colleagues, the historians Baer and Dinur, whom their Israeli successors were to castigate, as ferociously as Scholem had castigated his predecessors in Germany, for having ideologized Jewish historiography. Scholem admired the writer and Nobel Prize winner Agnon, who depicted many of

Scholem's colleagues at the Hebrew University in his uncompleted novel *Shira*. As in Scholem's original essay, Agnon comments harshly on the research conducted there: "In other places, scholarship justifies itself. Not so here, where, unless a scholarly study can be related to Israel's national destiny or to the ethic of the prophets, it is immediately discredited."<sup>42</sup>

Scholarship was supposed to be one of the most important foundations for the construction of a new Jewish society and a renewed Judaism. In the last respect, Scholem was more in accord with the founders of his discipline than he wanted to admit. And yet, as in their case, recourse to the past for the purposes of the present did not necessarily mean that important research was neglected. Robert Alter has summarized this in Scholem's case: "He has, ultimately, a definite interpretative view and a clear commitment to certain values, but his work cannot be faulted for tendentiousness because it is based on such painstaking research, always intent on determining the precise and particular facts no matter how much they may upset anyone's established views, including his own."<sup>43</sup>

### New Fathers: The "Jerusalem School" under Baer and Dinur

In 1936, the Berlin publishing house Schocken brought out a small book with the Hebrew title *Galut* (Exile). Its author was Fritz Yitzhak Baer, the first professor of Jewish history at the newly founded Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A few years earlier, under the name Fritz Baer, he had left Germany, where he had worked with Selma Stern at the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums. In a brief survey of Jewish history from biblical times to the present, Baer sketched the Jews' life in exile: "Political servitude and dispersion, the longing for liberation and reunion, sin and repentance and atonement: these are the larger elements that must go to make up the concept of Galut." However, Baer's work was also a clear polemic against all those who since Jost and Geiger had sought to interpret exile as a positive element in spreading Jewish teaching throughout the world. Baer considered these interpretations "more erroneous than any previous generation's view of Judaism." Instead, he cited the view of the sixteenth-century Prague rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (better known as Rabbi Loew), according to whom exile meant that "the Jews have left their natural place. But everything that leaves its natural place loses thereby its natural support until it returns."<sup>44</sup> Thus in a later work Baer was also unable to follow Jost, Geiger, and other historians in celebrating Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai's flight out of besieged Jerusalem and the foundation of a school in Yavne as a recipe for Jewish survival. In-

stead, Baer questioned the historicity of this Talmudic legend and in this context spoke out against the abandonment of the state concept in favor of a new, purely intellectual foundation for Jewish life.<sup>45</sup>

Baer wrote from a position just as ideological as that of the nineteenth-century scholars he so sharply attacked. “We may appeal to such ideas today with the consciousness that it is up to us to give the old faith a new meaning.” His demand that all Jews give up exile and gather in their own land, presented against the background of a deadly threat to Europe’s Jews, arose from his idea that the basic constants of Jewish history had not changed over two millennia of exile and that “the Galut has returned to its starting point. It remains what it always was: political servitude, which must be abolished completely.”<sup>46</sup>

Here we see, as so often before, a concrete political demand of the time—the dissolution of diaspora communities and the emigration of all Jews to the Land of Israel—presented as a conclusion drawn from historical analysis. The view of history communicated here is essentially static: the experience of exile “is and remains what it always was,” and the political situation of Jews in exile has not changed over the past two thousand years. Ben-Gurion’s call for Jews to revolt against their fate is presented here as a logical conclusion drawn from historical experience: exile inevitably leads to persecution and therefore must come to an end.

Like Scholem, Baer believed that only on the basis of the assumptions of the Zionist movement would it be possible to study Jewish history objectively and without external influence: “The Zionist worldview, which we adopt in our historical research, may not twist events to fit well-known ends, as earlier generations did, but must instead see things as they are.” At the same time, for him this also meant giving an account of the organic connection and greatness of Jewish history: “In reality, this historical realism serves only to demonstrate the greatness of the historical force being dealt with. It is not the task of historical criticism to reveal contradictions in tradition, to shift early times into later ones, to diminish great creations and dethrone heroes, but rather to sharpen and internalize our experience of historical phenomena.”<sup>47</sup>

Baer’s claim that unlike earlier generations he approached Jewish history objectively was accompanied by a demand for a useful history—a history that did not destroy myths but instead gave the newly founded nation a foothold in its land. The new nation’s historians had a duty to investigate the peculiar course of Jewish history—both the aspects that separated Jews from their surroundings, and those that united Jews in all periods and ages.<sup>48</sup> Baer came out of the tradition of German historiog-

raphy, in which the political history of the rulers connected with certain territories was central. He considered the transfer of these ideas to Jewish history to be one of his main tasks.<sup>49</sup> To realize this goal he chose a path opposite to the one chosen by Dubnow, who assumed that the Jewish people had attained the highest level in the development of nationalism and no longer needed a territory. In contrast, Baer constructed in medieval Jewish history a substitute for the lacking territory: namely, the unconditional will of the people to return to their hereditary land. The basis for such a popular will was the view of Jewish history as an organic unity with its own “spirit of the nation” (*ruah ha-umah*) or “soul of the nation” (*nefesh ha-umah*). From this perspective, every community was a substantial member of the great body of the community of Israel. And every community was in itself a “miniature organism.”<sup>50</sup> Such a conception based on Romantic ideas about the nation emphasized the commonalities of Jewish existence in the most diverse living situations. Baer did not deny the mutual influences between Jewish communities and their Christian or Muslim environments. In his early writings he referred at length to the parallels between the Jewish community and the medieval city, and between the teachings of the medieval Jewish mystic Yehuda he-Hassid and Francis of Assisi, or between kabbalistic literature and Christian symbolism in the group associated with Joachim da Fiore.<sup>51</sup> When his research interests shifted from the Middle Ages to the time of the Second Temple—a shift that is perceptible in the 1940s—his search for an authentic Judaism strengthened. He now saw fewer mutual influences or even effects of Christian doctrines and institutions on Judaism, arguing instead for the originality of Judaism. For example, he dated the beginnings of rabbinical Judaism four centuries before the rise of Christianity, thereby discovering an authentic Judaism inspired by Greek sources. He also sought to show how the social values of Rashi and medieval Judaism influenced the majority Christian society, and how medieval city-dwellers first emerged not in the Christian city but rather in the Jewish community.<sup>52</sup>

In a much-discussed article published in 1950, Baer maintained that the form of the Jewish community that originated in the eleventh century showed parallels with the medieval city and older Christian social models, but that the latter were Jewish in origin. In other words, Baer did not ignore the similarities between Jewish collective structures and those of the Christian environment. But for him this did not mean that Jewish communities imitated Christian concepts. The latter were in fact taken over from ancient Judaism. Thus, Baer could reject the claim that Jews

imitated Christian models and at the same time demonstrate a lengthy continuity and homogeneity of the idea of the Jewish community from antiquity into the Middle Ages. In addition, he could claim, as Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin pertinently observed, that even without its own country, Jewish life in the Middle Ages had the same foundation as it did in the time of ancient Jewish statehood. In the Middle Ages, Baer maintained, Jewish life was marked not by political passivity but only by a sovereignty transferred to the communal level.<sup>53</sup>

For the historian Israel Yuval, Baer's reorientation toward ancient statehood and his search for an authentic Judaism also mirrored the State of Israel's battle for independence, in which Baer was then participating: "The article was published at the very time of the struggle to establish the State of Israel, so that the history of the medieval Jewish community was thrust into a modern context and thus regained some validity in the minds of the state-builders who ought to cast off the shame of exile."<sup>54</sup> It may be typical of Baer's situation that in describing Jewish society through the Mishnah, he speaks anachronistically of the "State of Israel."<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to historians who were shaped by the Western discourse of emancipation, Baer refused to interpret Jewish history since the destruction of ancient sovereignty as the history of a religious idea. Like Dubnow, he took as his starting point the Jewish community as a "substitute state," though with the crucial difference that this substitute was only provisional, and would ultimately find its fulfillment in the "return" to the earlier statehood and the hereditary territory for which the "will of the people" strove.<sup>56</sup>

If Baer's doctrine of the authenticity of the Jewish community already represented a deviation from the views of earlier generations, this held even more for his critical observations on the rationalist heritage of medieval Sephardic Judaism. In any case, we find only a faint echo of the preference for the Sephardic heritage that was characteristic of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and that Schorsch called the "Myth of Sephardic Supremacy."<sup>57</sup> Baer, who became one of the leading chroniclers of Iberian Judaism, did not regard the latter as a model for his own time. On the contrary, his writings are marked by a general rejection of what he viewed as the assimilationist path taken by Jews on the Iberian Peninsula. He was less interested in the blossoming of Jewish culture under Muslim rule than in its decline after the Reconquista. According to him, the seeds of decline had already been planted during the period when Jewish culture flourished. The Spanish Jews' rationalist philosophy, their basic cosmopolitan attitude, and their economic prosperity were for him

the presuppositions that allowed them to adapt excessively to their surroundings, abandon inner Jewish values, and therefore—as the hour of reckoning approached—give in to the pressure of conversion.

In the foreword to his collection of sources on the history of the Jews in Christian Spain, which was also published in 1936 by Schocken, Baer protested against the romanticization of the Spanish Jewish ideal and again evoked Zionist historiography's demand for objectivity. The fact that he had chosen to study Spain was "determined partly by chance and partly by the subject matter; what was crucial for me was not the interest in the history of a country, but rather the desire to make a contribution to general Jewish history. I examined the documents in order to collect objective material, even when the result turned out to be unpleasant. For Jewish historians, the age of apologetics is over.... The events of recent years have sharpened our historical sense and thus only strengthened our pride in our destiny and our belief in our future. Hence we can hope that we will succeed in rebuilding the religiously determined worldview of our predecessors with modern methods of historical discovery."<sup>58</sup>

The first sentences of Baer's *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, which first appeared in Hebrew in 1945 and has remained fundamental ever since, allow us to see what his program is: "Jewish History, from its earliest beginnings to our own day, constitutes an organic unit. Each successive stage in its development reveals more fully the nature of the unique force guiding it, a force whose initial vitality is universally recognized and whose future course arouses widespread interest. Let this observation be the key to our study." Further leading ideas tend in the same direction: medieval Judaism represents an intermediate stage of Jewish development between "the original creative epoch of the national genius and the modern period of disintegration of traditional values."<sup>59</sup>

According to Baer, Spanish Jews were no longer aware of the original idea of exile as a stage in which Jews waited and suffered until they were released and returned to their own land: "Philosophic rationalism did not content itself with questioning the value of many of the laws and legends. It negated the very meaning and purpose of the Galut by denying the value of the nation's suffering in exile and of its survival in spite of its tribulations.... It thus prepared the ground for the apostasy of later generations."<sup>60</sup>

Baer did not dispute, any more than did the historians from whom he sought to distance himself, that in the Middle Ages the Spanish Jews had achieved a high degree of integration. However, in contrast to them he saw this integration as ultimately not positive but rather negative. It



might endure a generation or two, but then came the threat of new suffering and new persecution against which Jews could best defend themselves by moving somewhere else. It was not in the interest of Zionist historians to show that a successful integration in the diaspora was in fact possible.<sup>61</sup>

In contrast to his description of Spanish Jewry, Baer viewed Ashkenazi Jews—who often had been disparaged by nineteenth-century German Jewish historians as a narrow ghetto community—as the ideal of a diaspora community that did not allow itself to be co-opted by outside spiritual values and that remained true to Judaism down to its last hour. Forced by the Crusaders to choose between baptism and death, they adhered to their convictions and committed suicide rather than embrace Christianity. Baer contrasted the Spanish Jews' decadent way of life with a heroic Ashkenazi Jewry of the Middle Ages that was prepared to sacrifice itself for the sake of God.<sup>62</sup> The Jews of medieval Ashkenaz "repeated, under the conditions of life in the Middle Ages the heroic deeds from the time of the Second Temple and the time after the destruction of the Temple." Baer's view of the Middle Ages gave new weight to the old opposition, which can be found in the Books of the Maccabees, between a rational Judaism influenced by Hellenism and a basically irrational Judaism that separates itself from its environment. For Zionist historians, Galut was justifiable only if it did not become a new homeland, only if the conditions were maintained that would ultimately prepare the way for its dissolution as well as the Jews' return to their own state and soil.

Baer's writings on the Crusaders' persecutions must be seen against the background of research on the Crusades done under the influence of the Annales school, which was carried out from the point of view of Orientalists and Byzantinists, and which made the history of the victims more prominent.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, here too, the immediate biographical background is important. Baer wrote significant studies on this subject under the influence of the Israeli war of independence, in which the external threat posed by an apparently superior force and military defense were important elements of Israeli perception. Baer, who was the first historian to describe the relationships between the Jewish and Christian religious worlds of the Middle Ages, regarded the persecutions during the Crusades as symptomatic of the sufferings in exile that were also internalized in Jewish worship over the centuries in the form of the medieval liturgical poems known as *piyutim*.<sup>64</sup> The Ashkenazi Jews threatened by the Crusaders were to be admired for their steadfastness, but because they had

no homeland they had no other choice than to kill themselves. This, one can read between the lines, is now no longer necessary. After the return to the hereditary homeland and the establishment of an Israeli army, suicide has been replaced by self-defense.

Baer's later colleague at the Hebrew University, Benzion Dinur (Düna-burg), was the most radical advocate for a historical point of view centered on the Land of Israel. Born in 1884 to a traditional religious family in the Ukraine, in his academic career Dinur was a typical representative of Palestine's intellectual elite under the British Mandate. He received his university education in Germany and Switzerland, identified with socialist Zionism, emigrated in 1921 to Palestine, and pursued his academic activity (from 1936 on, at the Hebrew University) in close connection with his political activity.<sup>65</sup> History, Dinur argued, has the potential to link "students in an association of generations," and for him this association was intimately bound up with the Land of Israel.<sup>66</sup>

Dinur's periodization of Jewish history is characteristic of this view. In contrast to his predecessors and also to most of his contemporaries (even Baer), for him the history of the Land of Israel was central to Jewish history, even though he himself was not a historian of Palestine and was deeply concerned with the history of Jews in the diaspora. The period of exile is for him considerably shorter than it usually is in Jewish historiography. It begins not with the destruction of the Second Temple but rather with the loss of Palestine's Jewish character as a result of the Arab conquest in the seventh century. Again, the modern period begins not with Mendelssohn or the French Revolution but instead with the emigration in 1700 of a few rabbis who were influenced by the Sabbateans and led by Yehuda he-Hassid, which Dinur sees as the beginning of the return to the Land of Israel.<sup>67</sup> In this way the history of the Jews outside their own land is significantly reduced in length. Even in exile the relationship with the Land of Israel and the Hebrew language was uninterrupted: "In all periods the Jews related their battle for existence to the Land of Israel, which from one generation to another constituted the center of the Jewish will to survive." In dispersal the Hebrew language continued to be "an essential element of [Judaism's] historical uniqueness. In the consciousness of the people Hebrew always remained a living language."<sup>68</sup>

With his conception of an unbroken unity of the Jewish nation even after its dispersal, Dinur finds himself in complete opposition to the founders of Jewish historiography. While Jost had assumed that apart from their common religion nothing united Jews in exile, Dinur maintained that "even after the destruction of the Jewish state, when the

homeless Jews were scattered among the nations and had been absorbed by the various states in which they lived, the unity of the Jewish people still remained complete and unbroken. Only the external conditions of Jewish life changed, but not its essential character. Even in dispersion the nation formed a distinct organic entity.”<sup>69</sup> Dinur, unlike most of the historians discussed up to this point, “even thought that the Land of Israel and its Jewish population were still of general importance in the history of the nation during the period of the Diaspora.... The Jewish population of Palestine was the element of the nation that remained uncompromisingly and stubbornly loyal to its Jewish heritage.”<sup>70</sup>

In Dinur’s teleological view of history, everything is directed toward the return to Zion. Despite its many fascinating chapters, the history of exile is like a large waiting room that is surrounded by dangers and has only one exit. From this vantage point Dinur’s periodization becomes comprehensible, because the immigration of Jewish mystics in 1700 marked the entrance into a new time. For him no other event in Jewish history had “such a deep and lasting effect on all the different paths subsequently followed by Jewish history as this immigration.”<sup>71</sup> Finally, the Zionist revolt against exile at the end of the nineteenth century had “all of the qualities necessary to transform it [the Zionist revolt] into the great national Zionist movement, which with the historical changes wrought by it on the Jewish people and its ancient land and its tremendous impact on the whole of Jewish life, comprises practically the whole of Jewish history in the last two generations.” With the return to Zion, Jewish history also returns to its starting point, and the whole history of exile is therefore simply a stopping place on the way to its destination: “So powerful was the impetus of the revolt against the Galut that it forced the historical course of the nation back into its original channels and re-created the character of the modern Jew in the likeness of his ancient ancestors.”<sup>72</sup>

Dinur’s views were not to remain limited to the ivory tower of scholarship. As the director of the Jewish Teachers’ Training College, during the period of the British Mandate, he introduced the histories of Zionism and the Jewish population of Palestine as new areas of instruction, and as the Israeli minister of education from 1951 to 1955 he had a crucial influence on curricula and textbooks in the new Jewish state.<sup>73</sup> Despite significant modifications, for decades a view of history has been taught in Israeli schools according to which exile meant chiefly persecution and suffering, and secular Jewish history led teleologically to the emergence of the State of Israel.

Dinur was the most extreme representative of a trend in historical research that emphasized both the continuity of Jewish settlement and the persistent interest in the Land of Israel shown by Jews in exile. As the historian Jacob Barnai has shown in a comprehensive study, this interest arose in the late nineteenth century, among the eastern European maskilim, with historians such as Ze'ev Yavetz, David Yellin, and Abraham Moshe Lunz.<sup>74</sup> It continued among the Zionist movement's most important politicians. The best example of this is *Eretz Yisrael be-avar u-ve-hove* (The Land of Israel, Past and Present), a work published in New York in 1918, and edited by Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben Zvi, who were later to become, respectively, the prime minister and president of Israel. The political dimension of research on the history of Israel can be gauged by this fact alone as well as by the public's enormous interest in archaeological discoveries.<sup>75</sup> After the First World War, "authors and researchers who during the British Mandate had participated in the Zionist historiographical project in Palestine" saw themselves as working "in the service of the interests of the national movement. They regarded their research as the most important auxiliary in Zionism's struggle to realize its ideas."<sup>76</sup>

It is noteworthy that the authors of most of the books about the history of the Land of Israel that then appeared in Hebrew dealt almost exclusively with the history of the Jews in Palestine and gave only marginal attention to the surrounding non-Jewish population. The historian Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin sees this as a mythologizing of the country, which for Zionist historians could regain its history only through the return of the Jews.<sup>77</sup> The political conclusions that these historians drew partly from their own writings are once again most clearly expressed by Dinur. His short article "Our Rights to the Land of Israel" has as its subtitle "The Arabs Have Every Right in the Land of Israel, But No Right to the Land of Israel."<sup>78</sup> In the concentration on the Land of Israel characteristic of the first generation of Zionist historians, political demands were so mixed with historical findings that the historian Israel Bartal concluded that their writings should today be read less as critical research than as sources for the study of the Zionist ideology of their time.<sup>79</sup>

In 1924, a chair for research on the history of the Land of Israel was established at the Hebrew University, which had not yet officially opened. Two years later the recently founded Society for History and Ethnography in Palestine began publishing its periodical, *Meassef Zion*, whose successor, *Zion*, is still the most important journal for Israeli historical scholarship. Since 1935, it has published work not only on the history

of the Land of Israel but also on Jewish history in general. The first two editors were Baer and Dinur. The description of the history of the Jewish people as an organic whole was probably influenced mainly by Baer, while Dinur saw to it that the centrality of Palestine within general Jewish history became the journal's second pillar.

In the foreword to the first issue of the new series, *Zion*, the editors distanced themselves from apologetics, which in their view had been the mark of the battle for emancipation, and formulated their own program, which was typical of the early era of Zionist historical research: "Jewish history is the history of the Jewish people, which has never ceased to exist and whose significance has never waned. Transcending all times and places, Jewish history is a homogeneous unity.... The history of the recent past makes it easier for us to empathize emotionally with the life of earlier generations, and thus to gain a clear sense of unity over generations." The homogeneity of Jewish history in every period is as characteristic of this conception of history as is the central importance of the Land of Israel, and the connections between Israel and the diaspora. The persecutions suffered in the diaspora must also be given appropriate attention. Once this axiom is established, the objective nature of this way of understanding history will be confirmed: "We must try to see things 'as they are,' and arrive at an unbiased view of their development as a causal sequence."<sup>80</sup>

In situating Dinur and Baer in the context of a historiography shaped by Zionism, we must not overlook the fact that both of them drew attention to the contextualization of Jewish history, and indeed to the mutual influence of Jewish and Christian or Islamic intellectual trends and institutions. In their work, as so often in historiography, important research results that are still valuable today were masked by clearly ideological statements.

In examining Dinur's periodization of history, we have already seen how a classical representative of the Zionist school extended the central importance of Palestine in Jewish history from the first century to the seventh century. However, Dinur was not a specialist in that period. The work of his colleague Gedalyah Alon (1901–50), "which eventually emerged as the mainstream of Israeli scholarship, can be viewed as a detailed elaboration of Dinur's basic ideas about the character of Jewish national life after the Destruction [of the Second Temple]. Thus, the introduction to Alon's lecture notes published in English in 1980 as *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age*, is basically a paraphrase of the first chapter of [Dinur's] *Yisrael Ba-Golah*, with a few additions."<sup>81</sup>

Alon was born in Belarus as Gedalyah Rogonitzky and educated in the famed Slobodka yeshiva. After a short interlude in Berlin, in 1925 he emigrated to Jerusalem and became one of the first students at the newly founded Hebrew University, where he was later to teach. He sought to solve the problem of the lack of a national history after the destruction of the Second Temple by giving most weight to political institutions and not to a text like the Talmud. In his work, Alon repeatedly summarized the discoveries of earlier historical schools in order to refute them from the point of view of a Zionist interpretation. At the outset, he noted in this regard “that we shall begin our study by regarding the age as a continuation of the Second Commonwealth, expecting to find the Jews with all the attributes of a people dug in on its native soil.” He concedes that there is a grain of truth in the claim that the period of exile begins with the destruction of the Second Temple, but argues that the following centuries can be regarded as being at most a phase of transition from statehood to homelessness.<sup>82</sup> Most historians, Alon says, assume that the authority of the Babylonian center pushed the Palestinian center into the background, but this is not the case: “At no time up to the Moslem conquest did Babylonian Jewry capture the leadership. What is more, Babylonian Jewry remained in most respects subject to Palestinian authority up to the very end of the period we are discussing.”<sup>83</sup> He contradicts just as severely historians who played down the traumatic effects of the destruction of the Second Temple, and finally turns against the main trend of scholarship on Judaism when he argues that “a great many historians and other writers do treat the religio-spiritual element as very nearly the only basis of Jewish survival after the Destruction. But this leads them to conceive of Jewry after the year 70 as a religious communion largely devoid of the attributes of peoplehood. This is a view that can be maintained only by ignoring completely what the historical sources tell us.”<sup>84</sup>

In the introduction to a work based on his lectures and published posthumously in Hebrew in 1955, his colleagues emphasized his polemical tone and tried to justify it on scholarly grounds. Thus Baer noted, “He was also a fighter like one of the great *Tannaim*, ‘a ram that struck out to the west, the north, and the south.’ But what he was fighting for was only the objective truth.”<sup>85</sup> The translator and editor of the English version, Gershon Levi, prefaced his text with these words, “No historian can be completely free of some subjective tendencies. What were Alon’s? Obviously, he had a bias in favor of his own people. He considered the Jews of ancient times morally superior, by and large, to their pagan neighbors. But he made strenuous efforts to retain an objective outlook, and offered

no apologies for scoundrels among his own people. Anyone reading him will of course be immediately aware that this historian is a Jew living in his ancestral homeland, writing about his people's past experiences and traditions not as a stranger, but from within."<sup>86</sup> In his introduction to Alon's work, Ezra Zion Melamed still more clearly drew attention to the two levels of Alon's fighting nature: "In addition to their character as lectures, these records bear the stamp of the time in which they were written. These lectures were given in a fateful period, that of the founding of our country, and their late writer literally held the pen and the sword in his hands: in one hand the weapon—together with his comrades, he led the battle in defense and attack—and in the other the pen with which he wrote his lectures."<sup>87</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, the Zionist view of history was established and institutionally anchored. Thus, it represented the third basic trend in Jewish historiography, alongside the Eastern European perspective of a nation in the diaspora and the Western perspective shaped by individual emancipation. Its representatives attributed to the Jewish people, as did nineteenth-century European historians, a certain "essence." In the words of Laurence Silberstein, the basic characteristics of this people can be "isolated, identified, and described. This notion of an essential Jewishness [*sic!*] included the assumption of a unified, cohesive entity that had a continuous existence in history, and whose basic characteristics did not change."<sup>88</sup>

If the Jews were defined as a nation, and every nation is necessarily connected with a territory, then there was no future for Jewish existence in the diaspora. The biblical scholar and historian Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889–1963), who had been a professor at the Hebrew University since 1949, explained this emphatically in his four-volume work *gola v-nekhar* (Exile and Foreignness). Since the Jewish religion was universal and hence separated Jews from their respective environments, they could not assimilate themselves completely. "Religion set a 'universal' limit [to the basic tendency to assimilate]. The Jews could not enter into the hereditary community of their environment. As a result, they could also have no share in the natural hereditary right to the soil of their environment.... The Jews' 'foreignness' in the Gentiles' lands is thus not a malicious invention of their enemies. It has the deepest roots in the popular psyche.... For the foreseeable future, there will be only one path for the Jewish people, and it leads to the Jewish land."<sup>89</sup> For Kaufmann, a Jewish life in exile is possible only in part; it can become "complete" only when the Jews return to their own land.

In contrast to the views of Jewish historians in Europe and North America, the founding generation of Zionist historians developed a view of history that connected exile with persecutions and considered the survival of the Jewish people to be possible only on its own historical soil. The organic unity of the Jewish people over centuries and continents as well as the central importance of the Land of Israel throughout all of Jewish history is the focal point of their observations.

New Sons: Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson,  
Shmuel Ettinger, and Jacob Katz

During the first decades of the state, the foremost goal of Israel's politicians was to forge a homogeneous national Jewish identity from the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from European and Arab countries. Since the cultures from which these immigrants came were fundamentally different, Jewish history served as an ideal crucible. The external circumstances of the new Israeli historiography differed from those of Zionist historiography before 1945, as Yoav Gelber emphasized: "With the foundation of the State of Israel, trends in Zionist historiography changed.... The apparent disappearance of Jewish alternatives to Zionism ... in the Shoah and [Zionism's] success in establishing a Jewish state three years after the end of the Second World War ... was seen as a post facto confirmation of the correctness of the Zionist path from the outset.... Under these circumstances Zionist historiography lost the apologetic undertone that had up to that point been peculiar to it, and fell into the other extreme: resting on its laurels."<sup>90</sup>

After the conquest of further parts of the biblical land by Israel as a result of the Six-Day War of 1967, the emphasis on the history of this land received a new status. Departments for the study of the history of the Land of Israel were created at several universities, such as Tel Aviv, Bar-Ilan, and Haifa. In the new curricula emphasis was put on the continuity of Jewish settlement in such historical places as Hebron. A connection with the politics of the day can hardly be dismissed here.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, leading historians spoke out loudly, questioning not the central importance of Israel in Jewish thought but rather the evidence for continuous settlement, which others were trying to prove by means of archaeological excavations. Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson (1914–77), no doubt one of the most important scholars of Jewish history in Israel during the 1960s and 1970s, offered this comment: "If we check the map of Israel to see in which areas there were continuous settlements, it will turn out that most of the time we have not lived in the Land of Israel.... Zion-



ism did not awaken because Jews settled in Peki'in [a village in Galilee with a continuous Jewish settlement], but rather because Jews settled in Bialystok and longed for the Land of Israel."<sup>92</sup> In contrast to Dinur, Ben-Sasson was not concerned with proving the longest possible Jewish settlement in Israel but only in highlighting the deep connection between Jews in the diaspora and the Land of Israel.<sup>93</sup>

Ben-Sasson came from one of the most respected religious Jewish families of Eastern Europe, and he remained an observant Jew after his turn to Zionism and emigration to Palestine in the 1930s. Like Baer, under whom he studied, Ben-Sasson specialized chiefly in medieval history, and in 1949 he began teaching at the Hebrew University, where he represented the second generation of Jerusalem historians. The centuries of exile received even more attention. These historians recognized that the almost exclusive concentration on the Land of Israel contained an immense danger: the richness of Jewish history in the Middle Ages and early modern period as well as the connection between the various Jewish communities in the diaspora might thus be pushed into the background or even forgotten. Politically and culturally, this threat was also expressed in the movement of the "Canaanites," which attracted a certain amount of attention in the early decades of the State of Israel's existence. Its followers promoted the idea that modern Israel should concentrate on its ancient Near Eastern roots and thus on its close connections with the Arab cultures in the area. At the same time, they wanted to draw a clear distinction between Israel and the Jewish diaspora in history and the present.

The spirits that Klausner, Dinur, and others had called up with their account focused on the Land of Israel, and their emphasis on ancient statehood had become independent and produced an extremist ideology. The second generation of historians in Israel, of whom Ben-Sasson was in many respects typical, now had to produce a corrective, thereby criticizing their intellectual predecessors: "For them, the culture of the Bible and perhaps also the age of the Second Temple is good enough, and everything else is a rootless exile. For them, the culture and creativity of the true people stop at the latest in 135 CE, and do not begin again until 1881 at the earliest."<sup>94</sup> This conception had to be combated especially in the national education system, where there were teachers who openly expressed their reluctance to teach Jewish history. According to Ben-Sasson, this was the result of Zionism's decades-long rejection of postbiblical Jewish history.<sup>95</sup>

Despite this refusal to downplay the history of the diaspora, Ben-Sasson left no doubt that in principle he stood in the tradition of his pre-

decessors regarding the central importance of the Land of Israel and the national perspective on Jewish history. For him as for them, the knowledge of one's own history was a necessary precondition for the political consolidation of a Jewish state. He perceived in the Enlightenment's concentration on the individual an existential threat to the continued existence of the Jewish people. Ben-Sasson had little sympathy for the Western world's turn away from national history and toward the history of the individual. He did not hesitate to use the first-person plural in his works on the Jews of past centuries, and proudly pointed out that the present-day Jewish nation could demonstrate a direct tradition of at least thirty-four hundred years back to the period of slavery in Egypt.<sup>96</sup> The return to history was thus of great importance for the construction of a Jewish national identity, and took place in Ben-Sasson's case with hardly less pathos than in those of his predecessors.<sup>97</sup>

Ben-Sasson was the editor of the most influential general account of Jewish history in the second half of the twentieth century. This *History of the Jewish People*, composed exclusively by historians (and one archaeologist) at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and running to more than a thousand pages, represents—even if no longer in the radical style of the first generation of Zionist historians—a point of view in which the Land of Israel is essential to Jewish activity or at least Jewish thinking, although it pinpoints in the history of the diaspora chiefly the sufferings of exile. Jewish history is described as a continuum stretching over four millennia and five continents, as many critics noted. “The new *History of the Jewish People* is first and foremost a very learned exposition of Zionism throughout history; it is a projection of a recent ideology to the whole of the Jewish past, reflecting philosophical views of Yitzhak Baer, the latter's spirit hovers over most of the volume,” wrote the British historian Chimen Abramsky in a review of the book.<sup>98</sup> It is no wonder that British and American historians had major problems with this Jerusalem project. In the important American Jewish periodical *Commentary*, the tenor was similar to that of Abramsky's review in the British *Jewish Quarterly*: respect for the great synthetic achievement, but also explicit criticism of the Israel-centered position.<sup>99</sup>

This position was expressed most clearly in Ben-Sasson's introduction to the original Hebrew edition, which was, significantly, not included in either the English or German translations. Ben-Sasson stressed that the book would help confirm the view that there was a Jerusalem school of Jewish historiography. First, he emphasized the unbroken character of the Jewish people: “Since Antiquity, the Jewish people has looked back

on a continuous history.... Their self-conception and cultural identity, with their national components, testify to a national continuity in the life of the Jewish people, over and beyond all changes—in fact ever since it made a people out of the tribes, down to our own time.”<sup>100</sup> Although the Jews had always been affected by outside influences, the latter had not been able to change the essential traits of the Jewish people formed in the Land of Israel: “These influences,” Ben-Sasson wrote, “changed details, and sometimes larger particulars, and put different accents on things, sometimes important ones. But this could not destroy the immanent tendencies.”<sup>101</sup>

The first chapters of the book discuss the “childhood” of the Jewish people, and portray its early origins in accord with biblical and postbiblical reports. Then, in the part of the book on the Middle Ages, which he wrote, Ben-Sasson draws a picture of a persecuted minority, chiefly in areas under Christian rule.<sup>102</sup> The “external relations” of the Jewish people are characterized by violence, such as the massacres by the Crusaders and the persecutions of the Jews at the time of the Black Plague in 1348. The “internal” history of medieval Jewry is one of a homogeneous and coherent Jewish culture that shaped both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.

The Israeli historian Shmuel Ettinger (1919–88) wrote the modern history for this volume (an earlier version of his contribution had already appeared in Hebrew between 1959 and 1964 as a textbook for use in Israeli high schools). He viewed this period mainly from the perspective of a battle between two opposed tendencies: on the one side, there were the Jews who wanted to be absorbed into the peoples among whom they lived: “For them assimilation and conversion were the sole cure for that hereditary disease—their Jewish origin.” Others, however, did not consider absorption into the surrounding peoples to be a realistic solution, and demanded a return to their “old homeland” and the reestablishment of territorial statehood. For Ettinger, who had grown up in Leningrad and was a committed Communist before becoming a secular Zionist, modern Jewish history, despite its diversity, could ultimately be reduced to a duel between the opposed tendencies to assimilation and self-assertion: “On the one hand we find the centripetal force driving individual Jews and various groups within the people to identify themselves with the Jewish past and with all Jews throughout the Diaspora, and on the other hand we see the centrifugal tendency pulling them apart and bringing them closer to their alien surroundings.”<sup>103</sup> It is no wonder that there was a good deal of criticism by American Jewish historians. Thus regarding Ettinger’s approach, Chaim Raphael wrote, “He puts history

into an ideological straitjacket by summarizing this century, in a chapter-title, as the ‘Failure of Emancipation.’”<sup>104</sup> In the words of the historian Paula Hyman, for Ettinger there is a clear schema of modern Jewish history: “The modern period is implicitly organized according to three overarching categories—emancipation, failure of emancipation, and Zionism. Because Ettinger presumes that emancipation has always failed and must everywhere fail, it is difficult for him to fit the American Jewish community into his schema. He solves this dilemma by according the history of American Jews a mere handful of pages in his several hundred-page discussion of the modern era.”<sup>105</sup>

Ettinger was prepared to acknowledge openly that his Zionist point of view was expressed in his work. He thought little of historians “who think they can be objective, collect historical facts like postage stamps and order them in a series, and try to recover historical events and processes.” Every historian, Ettinger says, has predetermined opinions, and analyzes the material in accord with them.<sup>106</sup> This implies a certain critique of the founders’ generation and especially Baer’s positivism. Confronted by a choice between representing Jewish history as cultural pluralism and representing it as a melting pot, Ettinger remained true to his teacher Dinur and opted for the latter. His view of history makes the commonalities and connections among the various diaspora communities central, deliberately leaving their cultural peculiarities in the background. This attitude had its basis in the conception of Israel as a crucible in which the various diasporic traditions had to slowly melt into a unified national culture. In one article, he compares “typical” Israeli names with “typical” Ashkenazi and Sephardic ones, and wants to replace them with new “Israeli” ones: “Thus there must be Yorams and Uris, and no Kalmans or Salmans, and also no Sa’adias or Zekharias. Excuse me, but that’s our culture!”<sup>107</sup>

Another collective work on Jewish history planned as early as 1947 and published in eleven volumes during the 1960s got only as far as the volume on “The Dark Ages,” which summarized the history of the Jews in Christian Europe until the beginning of the Crusades. This series was not able to achieve the lofty goal that the editor, Benzion Netanyahu, set for himself: “to present a new, authoritative history of the Jewish people from its beginnings to the present time.”<sup>108</sup>

Later observers have noted that the strong emphasis on the continuity of Jewish history was long an obstacle to the reception of new and provocative research theses that came from the Western world, and seemed to challenge firmly held notions such as the nation and the people.<sup>109</sup> Yet among Jerusalem historians as well there was criticism of the “Palestino-

centric” perspectives described above. As we have already seen, this critical approach was partly adopted by both Scholem and Ben-Sasson.

The most important critic of this view of history among the second-generation Jerusalem scholars was undoubtedly Jacob Katz, whom David Myers called the “most venerated Jewish historian of his age.”<sup>110</sup> He never denied the significance of the Land of Israel throughout Jewish history, and he sought to show that Zionism was not just a secular revolutionary movement that began with the first aliyah in 1881. In his important studies on the prehistory and early history of Zionism, Katz refers to the significance of traditional rabbis like Zvi Hirsch Kalischer and Judah Loeb Alkalai.<sup>111</sup> As Jacob Barnai claimed, it was not entirely fortuitous that it was a religiously oriented Zionist historian such as Katz who emphasized these roots, to which secular historians like Ettinger accorded slight importance.<sup>112</sup> Katz had little interest in radical Zionist interpretations like those of Dinur and his followers. For his aggressive critique of Dinur published in 1956 he chose the provocative title “Between National History and Historical Nationalism.” He attacked Dinur’s politicized historical worldview, including his attempt to construct a historical “essence of Judaism” on the basis of considerations of contemporary utility. His criticism of Dinur’s periodization was particularly harsh. For Katz, the idea that the modern period began with the immigration to Palestine of the group of mystics around Rabbi Yehuda he-Hassid in 1700 was historically untenable.<sup>113</sup>

As a historian, Katz’s attention was focused on the preservation of tradition in the modern age. Under such rapidly changing circumstances, how could Jews hold fast to Judaism? This question was also an existential one for Katz. Having grown up as the descendant of famous Orthodox rabbis in a Hungarian Jewish community that included diverse religious trends, and having been shaped by both the Frankfurt school of sociology and the Frankfurt Orthodox yeshiva, Katz tried to build bridges in his work and personal development.<sup>114</sup> Secular culture and Judaism should be connected with each other, he argued, because anything else would amount to ghettoization. He saw his research in the same way: every generation had to redefine its relation between Judaism and secular culture.

As a religious Zionist, Katz also sought to restore the religious aspects to Jewish historiography. He saw this as involving not a religious interpretation of Jewish history but rather an inclusion of religious sources in secular historiography. No other historian of Jewish modernity has taken the *halakha*, the Jewish religious law, so seriously as the founda-

tion of Jewish life. The religious dimension of Jewish existence shapes not only his classical writings, such as *Tradition and Crisis or Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, which deal with the relationships between Jews and their Christian environment, but also his monographs on more specific themes—for example, on the role of the Shabbat goy, or the religious schism between Hungarian and German Jews in the nineteenth century.<sup>115</sup>

Did Katz's self-conception as a religious Jew play a role in his choice of subjects and the way he evaluated them? He did not deny that it did. In an interview given shortly before his death, he emphasized his bond with religious Judaism and its impact on his scholarship: "My own contribution was that I maintained that Orthodoxy too is something new, and that variations within the continuing tradition are worthwhile looking into, no less than what led out of tradition entirely. Perhaps my own religious perspective is responsible for this approach."<sup>116</sup> The historian David Berger rightly characterized this connection when he observed, regarding the origin of *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, that "when a scholar writes a book about a subject that he is not fully trained to address, the question of motivation arises in more acute fashion than usual. I strongly suspect that Katz was drawn to this scheme as a result of a religious concern that he acknowledges and an ethical one that he downplays."<sup>117</sup>

Katz was aware of the biographical influences on historiography, but did not regard them as opposed to his conviction that the historian must attempt to depict past worlds in a way that is as close to reality as possible. "There is no Orthodox historiography because there is no Orthodox history," he wrote in his memoirs, and in a 1966 article he demanded that the historian write history in such a way that "his findings and descriptions truly mirror reality, neither breaking nor bending the image portrayed, adding nothing to it and leaving nothing out of it."<sup>118</sup> As Dan Porat was able to show, this postulate holds for Katz as a scholar, but not for the other, little-known side of Katz as a teacher and the author of a textbook on Jewish history for use in state religious schools. This textbook contrasts sharply with the one later written by Ettinger, also for use in state religious schools. As an educator of high school students, Katz saw his primary task not as providing a true reflection of reality but rather as using history to build a national consciousness and religious identification.<sup>119</sup>

Katz's most important work marked a new departure in Israeli scholarship. In *Tradition and Crisis* he realized Dubnow's ideal of producing a sociological study of Jewish society. As a student of the sociologist Karl Mannheim, who also came from Hungary and worked in Frankfurt,

Katz was well prepared to undertake such a task. Thus with *Tradition and Crisis* Katz achieved, almost two decades after Dubnow's death, the breakthrough to a structuralist history worthy of the name. In contrast to earlier researchers on Jewish history, Katz does not adopt a chronological scheme. He is more interested in a cross-section of a certain society at a certain time. The fact that he chose for his studies a period ranging from the late sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries is significant, because these centuries had previously been either largely skipped over or assessed negatively—as did Graetz, who described this period as that of a general decadence in Judaism.

In contrast to the periodization usually adopted by European historians, in Jewish historiography before Katz there was no idea of an early modern period. The Middle Ages had its brilliant sides, among which the idealized golden age in Spain was repeatedly emphasized—but in the classical view of practitioners of scholarship on Judaism they grew dimmer and dimmer until finally a new age began with the Enlightenment. Katz was interested in one of these apparently dark epochs of “decline,” and built it into his scheme of world history as a transition between the Middle Ages and modernity. One might say that he restored an early modern period to Jewish history.

The geographic dimension chosen by Katz was also rather unusual for a historian of Jewish history. It included the whole area of Ashkenazi Judaism—that is, the region from Alsace in the west to Poland and Lithuania in the east. In this broad framework, he depicted a fundamental unity of the Jewish community above and beyond numerous political borders.<sup>120</sup> Here too, Katz differs from historians who wanted to write German Jewish, French Jewish, or Polish Jewish national histories as well as from classical Zionist-influenced historians whose attention was in each case focused chiefly on the relationship between Jewish life and the Land of Israel.<sup>121</sup>

Despite differences in emphasis, Katz operated within the framework of a Zionist worldview that rejected assimilation in the history of European Judaism and saw in the construction of a Jewish state the sole way out of the crisis of modern Judaism. Katz and the generation of historians that followed him contradicted previous Zionist positions on many points, but they did not deal with the existential issues raised by the so-called new historians of a later generation.

More radical than Katz in his criticism of the Jerusalem school was the literary historian Baruch Kurzweil (1907–72). Kurzweil sympathized with the Orthodox doctrines of thinkers like Hirsch and Isaac Breuer, and

taught at the religious Bar-Ilan University. His strong reaction to Katz's work, published in the most important Israeli daily newspaper, *Ha-aretz*, could scarcely conceal that its true target was Scholem. Kurzweil sharply rejected Scholem's view that Zionist historiography could achieve a new standard of objectivity if it just overcame the apologetics of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. He regarded attempts to normalize Jewish history, which Katz also supported, as illusory. Appealing to thinkers like Karl Löwith and Leo Strauss, Kurzweil doubted the possibility of any kind of objective representation of the past. This doubt, Kurzweil said, was already widespread, and now had to reach Jerusalem as well.

Kurzweil sought to defeat Scholem with his own weapons. He turned the reproaches that the twentieth century's most important representative of Jewish studies had directed against his nineteenth-century predecessors against Scholem himself. Accordingly, for Kurzweil, Scholem's attempt at a reevaluation of all values in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* amounted to the creation of a new myth that now replaced the old battle for political emancipation and religious reform. Kurzweil argued that present-day secular Jews were trying to substitute the normative intellectual structure of a Judaism shaped by rationalism with their interest in the *kabbalah*. Like his predecessors, in his scholarship Scholem had—according to Kurzweil—pursued specific ideological goals, but hid them under the mantle of objectivity. Worse yet, unlike his predecessors Scholem must have been aware of his contradictions, because he had reproached them in others.<sup>122</sup> A Jewish history that transformed mysticism into a substitute religion for unbelieving Jews was, for Kurzweil, simply unthinkable. In contrast, he was convinced that “the Science of Judaism is not a substitute for religion and surely religion will not be salvaged by it. The malaise with history must teach us that it is impossible to expect from the history of Judaism what Judaism itself can not give.”<sup>123</sup> Scholem could not recognize himself in Kurzweil's interpretation, as he told his “respected opponent” in a personal letter: “Everything that you attribute to me regarding the genealogical relationship between secular nationalism and the Sabbatean movement is of your own invention.... I myself have never produced nonsense of that kind.”<sup>124</sup>

This discussion is reminiscent of the initial question that Yerushalmi asked of modern Jewish historiography in general: Were its leaders transforming history itself into a substitute religion for “fallen Jews”? For most practitioners of German-language *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, we can answer in the affirmative only with qualifications, because they were Jews who had abandoned religious belief only to a certain extent: religion



lost its status neither for them personally nor in their historical accounts. But that cannot be said about Dubnow, who prayed “in holy silence ... in the temple of historiography” that he had built. Here, history becomes explicitly a substitute religion. Among secular Zionist historians, the relationship between history and religion was somewhat more complicated. For them, the new statehood often was raised to the status of a religion. However, with the distance of two generations, this view was itself replaced by a more radical counterreaction: now precisely those historians who had seen the problems of historical apologetics as being resolved by the foundation of a Jewish state were reproached for their apologetics by their intellectual grandchildren, who called themselves “new historians.”

### The Revolt of the Grandchildren: The New Historians

Since the 1980s, a controversy among historians has occupied the Israeli public, and in the course of this controversy a whole series of “holy cows” that had for decades been considered untouchable were slaughtered. In addition to the reproach that the Jewish political leadership had done too little to save Jews from the Shoah, the so-called new historians were concerned chiefly with the still more explosive question of whether Israel was born in innocence or guilty of having driven out hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees. This violation of the taboos on criticism of national myths took place in the context of similar processes in other discourses of national memory.<sup>125</sup>

In the framework of this book, only one question of the much more complex “Israeli historians’ controversy” can be addressed: How was this controversy related to the fundamental problems of Jewish historiography and especially the renewed challenge to a Jewish national history? First, let us briefly examine the central issues in this controversy. In a much-discussed study published in the early 1990s, the Israeli journalist and historian Tom Segev suggested that the Zionist leadership could have done significantly more to save Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Historians had already critically investigated the aid provided by the Jews of Palestine and their political representatives.<sup>126</sup> However, none of them had come to such radical conclusions as Segev, according to whom all the leaders of the future state and particularly Ben-Gurion wanted to give priority to the construction of the state: “For the leaders of the state-to-be it was not their job to save the Jews of Europe.”<sup>127</sup>

Thus Segev entered into the arena of a debate that had begun a few years earlier. A younger generation of historians who had been born at the time of the state’s founding or shortly thereafter, and who had now

for the first time gained access to archival material relating to the events of 1948–49, provoked its intellectual predecessors with discoveries that had previously been taboo. Within two years of the fortieth anniversary of the State of Israel, a series of studies investigating its founding was published by critical historians and sociologists such as Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, Gershon Shafir, and Simha Flapan.<sup>128</sup> In the first programmatic text produced by the new group, Morris, one of its main figures, described them as the new historians, who distanced themselves from an “old” and “official” history.

A somewhat closer examination of this document is worthwhile, because even if at first glance it seems to be concerned only with questions relating to the history of the founding of the State of Israel, the full extent of the discussion becomes clear only when viewed against the background of the development of a Zionist-oriented historiography. Let us recall that the Zionist historians of the first and second generations called for a new kind of historical study detached from any kind of apologetics. Only in Jewish society freed from the constraints of a non-Jewish and potentially antisemitic environment could such a historical discipline develop. Now, however, the new historians directed the same reproach against their intellectual predecessors. In an environment of continuing existential danger, the new historians argued, the older Zionist historians had written just as apologetically the history not only of the State of Israel but also of the Jewish experience that had led to its founding. This kind of historiography was now rejected as the old history:

The essence of the old history is that Zionism was a beneficent and well-meaning progressive national movement; that Israel was born pure into an uncharitable, predatory world; that Zionist efforts at compromise and conciliation were rejected by the Arabs; and that Palestine’s Arabs, and in their wake the surrounding Arab states, for reasons of innate selfishness, xenophobia, and downright cussedness, refused to accede to the burgeoning Zionist presence and in 1947 to 1949 launched a war to extirpate the foreign plant.... The old history makes the further claim that in the later stages of the 1948 war and in the years immediately thereafter Israel desperately sought to make peace with all or any of its neighbors, but the Arabs, obdurate and ungenerous, refused all overtures, remaining hell-bent on destroying Israel. The old historians offered a simplistic and consciously pro-Israel interpretation of the past, and they deliberately avoided mentioning anything that would reflect badly on Israel.<sup>129</sup>

Morris turns Scholem's argument that Zionism could provide a free view of Jewish history "without emphasis on any particular side" into its opposite. The political constraints that the constant threat to the State of Israel provoked led to a one-sided view and evaluation of the sources. Because they were themselves involved in this, the so-called old historians were also unable to maintain any distance on events: "The old historians had lived through 1948 as highly committed adult participants in the epic, glorious rebirth of the Jewish commonwealth. They were unable to separate their lives from this historical event, unable to regard impartially and objectively the facts and processes that they later wrote about. Indeed, they admit as much. The new historians, by contrast, are able to be more impartial."<sup>130</sup>

Like the old historians, Morris also adheres to the idea of objective historical scholarship. However, despite his declaration of belief in impartiality, he can hardly conceal his political motives. Whereas one of the tasks of the old Zionist historiography was to legitimate the State of Israel historically by writing a national history, the new historians saw their mission as the promotion of peace in the Near East: "The new history is one of the signs of a maturing Israel (though, no doubt, there are those who say it is a symptom of decay and degeneration). What is now being written about Israel's past seems to offer us a more balanced and a more 'truthful' view of the country's history than what has been offered hitherto. It may also in some obscure way serve the purpose of peace and reconciliation between the warring tribes of that land."<sup>131</sup>

The critique of the old historians is not exhausted by the process of breaking taboos on the myths of the State of Israel's birth. Instead, it must be seen in the social context of the emergence of an intellectual critique that can be subsumed under the idea of "post-Zionism." The post-Zionists (a group to which not all new historians belong; for instance, Morris himself declines to be so characterized) do not simply maintain, as the concept occasionally used earlier might suggest, that with the establishment of the State of Israel and the achievement of Zionism's most important goals the Zionist movement had fulfilled its mission. Instead, they see post-Zionism as a modification of Zionism in which some of its major axioms are challenged—for example, the national character of the Jews in all periods of their history, their unconditional will to a "return" to "their" land as the result of a process of historical "normalization," and the exclusive right to the territory that some people call Palestine and others call the Land of Israel.<sup>132</sup>

In the debate about the essence of Zionism, historians like Morris and more radical, post-Zionist historians and sociologists are called on in

support of the demand that the history of Zionism be situated in the context of colonial movements.<sup>133</sup> Thus, for example, Gershon Shafir, a sociologist teaching in the United States, tried to put the whole development of Zionism in the context of postcolonialism.<sup>134</sup> The Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling similarly interprets Zionism as an example of European colonialism. Comparisons with immigrant societies such as the United States, Australia, and South Africa should be drawn, we are told, “to deal with Israel’s colonial legacy, the very allusion to which is taboo, in both Israeli society and Israeli historiography.”<sup>135</sup> Historian Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin justifies the political dimension of this new historiography, maintaining that its position in the present Near East conflict is a necessary element in public debate: “Historiographical discussion can illuminate the necessary conditions for political consciousness in the present as well, whatever the political solution may be. By incorporating specific questions into research, historiographical discussion provides not a source of authority for this or that line of argument but rather a starting point for political discussion.”<sup>136</sup>

As we have seen, these statements by the new historians cannot be separated from current political debates. If their opponents were concerned to justify Israeli policy, the new historians’ conception of history was intended to promote the emergence of a new, post-Zionist, binational “society of all citizens.”<sup>137</sup> It might be objected that these recent debates belong to Israeli and not Jewish historiography. But the two cannot be simply separated from one another. The American historian Laurence Silberstein has argued that the post-Zionist position is concerned not solely with the superficial question of whether the Jewish state was born in sin but rather with the much deeper issue of whether in its history the Jewish people can be characterized by its “essence”: “From a post-Zionist perspective Judaism would be viewed not as a core of essential ideas or practices but as a dynamic, inherently conflicted discourse and practice in a continual state of flux.” Here too, the connection with current politics is deliberately not erased: “The critique of essentialist notions of identity and the resulting efforts to formulate alternative conceptions have much to contribute to a postzionist critique of zionist formulations of identity, and to a rethinking of Jewish identity in general. Moreover, the significance of this critique extends beyond the borders of Israel and as well applies to Jews in the diaspora where the influence of zionist discourse remains strong.”<sup>138</sup>

The clearest challenge to the Zionist narrative of a Jewish national history is offered by Boaz Evron. He appropriates the thesis that nations are imaginary constructs, and applies it to Jewish history. According to him,

for two millennia the Jews were a religious community that was scattered among different peoples and was not bound together by any national elements. Apart from religion, Jews in North Africa had nothing in common with Jews in Lithuania. They had not spoken the same language or pursued the same way of life. In violent contrast to Zionist historians, Evron emphasizes that after the loss of their sovereign Jewish state, Jews in Palestine had lived as if in exile, and that only a few Jews had returned from the diaspora to the Holy Land. He maintains that for two thousand years the Land of Israel had no central significance for Jews, and that it was the eastern European Jews who since the nineteenth century had grafted onto the whole of Judaism an imagined national identity and founded the Zionist project to realize their own ends.<sup>139</sup>

With the intensification of the Israeli-Arab conflict as a result of the second Palestinian intifada, the Israeli “historians’ controversy” took a new turn that shows how much current political events and historical interpretations are connected with each other. In a number of articles and discussions, Morris, who had gotten the controversy going with his provocative claims regarding the expulsion of Palestinians in the Israeli war of independence, gave his scholarly findings a new political twist. While he did not deny that Ben-Gurion was one of the most vehement spokesmen for the transfer of the Arab population, he now reproached him for not having gone far enough.<sup>140</sup>

Let us return again to the early Zionists’ hopes: they thought that with the establishment of a Jewish state, Jewish historiography could be more objective because the opinion of the surrounding peoples would no longer have to be taken into account. The old evil of apologetics, whether for the goals of emancipation or autonomy, now seemed obsolete. A few decades after the establishment of the Jewish state, the so-called new historians reproached Zionist historians for being even more apologetic than their predecessors. In order to justify the Zionist conception of history, their critics suggested, Zionist historians had marginalized the diaspora and overemphasized the experience of Jews in the Land of Israel. Still more, with the violent conflict that accompanied the State of Israel from the outset, historiography had been put in the service of politics.

## 6. POSTMODERN INFLUENCES

### *A New Subjectivity*

Someone who doesn't know better finds in it both history and poetry, and in reality there is neither one nor the other.

—Shmuel Joseph Agnon, *Shira*

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN an emancipatory, diaspora-nationalist, and Zionist narrative of Jewish history dwindle almost to insignificance in view of the postmodern revolution. For the proponents of a “linguistic turn,” reality consists only of discourses and the whole world is a text. If we follow their reasoning, any historical narrative seems naive and any reconstruction of facts superfluous. The nation would be imagined, traditions invented, historiography nothing more than a question of power, and historians an authority controlling the past. These claims—admittedly somewhat exaggerated here—occupy historians after a “paradigm change” that could mean the “end of history as a scholarly discipline.”<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, Peter Novick was already observing that “as a broad community of discourse, as a community of scholars united by common aims, common standards, and common purposes, the discipline of history had ceased to exist.”<sup>2</sup>

These alarm bells may have been just as premature as Francis Fukuyama's proclamation of the “end of history.” No one disagrees that at the end of the twentieth century, historical research had changed both in content and methodology. Historians sought and still seek for answers to the postmodern challenge that they found in feminism, postcolonialism, ethnic and queer studies, microhistory, and the history of everyday life in a new cultural history and a new history of ideas.

After examining Daniel Boyarin's work as an example of an attempt to radically challenge the previous view of the Jewish past, we will see how in the wake of postmodern discourse religious attempts to interpret Jewish history outside the academic spectrum sought to claim legitimacy. On the whole, for Jewish historiography the postmodern revolution was a gentle one. Gender history and a new cultural history, for instance, fought over niches, but in general scholars continued along the broad paths that had been developed over the past two centuries.

However, it cannot be denied that there is one visible difference. Earlier historians' lofty claim to provide an account of the past uninflected by their own personality is frequently abandoned in favor of a position that is deliberately colored subjectively. This can be regarded, on the one hand, as a fundamental methodological renovation. Thus David Myers remarked about older historians of Jewish history that "only rarely did they stop to acknowledge the contextual factors or ideological stimuli shaping their work."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, this new subjectivity can be seen with Yerushalmi as simply an "expression of a new sense of confidence in their [the new generation's] place in the academy that was prepared by the struggles and achievements of their predecessors."<sup>4</sup>

However this change is defined, since the end of the twentieth century an openly acknowledged subjectivity or self-reflection has been discernible in much writing on Jewish history. Just as earlier it was good form to emphasize the scholarly goal of objectivity and the exclusion of the author's personal beliefs, it has become almost *de rigueur* among contemporary authors to disclose one's position, biography, and ideological view.

In its most radical form, a postmodern view on Jewish history contests the existence of an essential connection between Jews in various times and places, and regards Jewish history as simply an imagined construction based on the sum of Jews' extremely different histories. Thus, it suggests that the differences between the life of Jews in medieval Germany and that of their contemporaries in North Africa are greater than those between German Jews and their non-Jewish environment. One can speak of the Jewish experience in Central Europe in a Central European context, but not in an overall Jewish context. For adherents to this view, any overall Jewish perspective on history is a modern construction.<sup>5</sup>

This radical challenge resulted in a rejection of any attempt to write a comprehensive Jewish history. Instead of an all-inclusive "master narrative," there could be only a multitude of "small narratives" constituting a kind of counterhistory in relation to traditional historiographical versions. These smaller narratives should renounce any claim to objectivity and instead openly present themselves as subjective ways of seeing things. In fact, from this standpoint there is no overall postmodern account of Jewish history, but only a number of studies on particular subjects that pave the way for a new perspective on Jewish history—for example, by attempting to break through a male-dominated discourse to examine ideas about the Jewish body,<sup>6</sup> throw a critical light on the role of Jews as social outsiders or established insiders in a multicultural context,<sup>7</sup> or engage in queer Jewish studies.<sup>8</sup>

An example of self-reflective research taken from the area of feminist studies is Chava Weissler's book *Voices of the Matriarchs*, in which she investigates *tkhines*, private prayers said by Jewish women. In her foreword, she notes that like her predecessors, she does not approach the object of her research free of ideological assumptions and personal interests: "If I smile a little at my predecessors, it is only because I am keenly aware that my own work, too, is historically situated, influenced by the currents of the time. My interest in Yiddish devotional literature as a source for the study of women's religious lives rides the rising tide of scholarly interest in both women's history and social history.... For me, then, it was 'obvious' that the 'true' importance of Yiddish *tkhines* and other popular religious material was that they enable us to reconstruct the religious lives of 'ordinary' Jews—those who were not part of the educated elite—and ordinary women."<sup>9</sup>

For the feminist researcher these texts, often centuries old, become sources of self-assurance—but also self-doubt. Regarding her whole area of research, Weissler self-critically observes that "a feminist scholar strives to be engaged, responsible, and honest, and aware of the importance of her own position in the shaping of her account. I write as a scholar of Jewish studies and of women's studies, trained as a folklorist; I write, as well, as a woman and a Jew. At least in part, this chapter is a meditation on the role of anger and of loyalty, on how anger and loyalty shape a scholarly account. Perhaps most fundamentally, it is a reflection on how, as I struggled for a way to stand within the traditions I hold dear, I sought a language that could encompass both anger and loyalty, a language that would help me discover whether or not they must necessarily conflict. Have I found it? I am not sure."<sup>10</sup>

Daniel Boyarin, who teaches at Berkeley, has made the most radical attempt at a new interpretation of Jewish history from a postmodern perspective. In *Unheroic Conduct* he interprets his research as an act that liberates, by means of a one-sided mode of reading, oppressed groups such as women and homosexuals. It is significant that at the end of this book we find ourselves confronted, as we were when discussing the beginning of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, by a Talmud scholar trained not in history but rather in philology.<sup>11</sup> Like the founders of the discipline that gathered around Zunz and Geiger, Boyarin studied the most diverse periods in Jewish history, from the Apostle Paul to Herzl. Just as he is an unorthodox scholar, he writes in an unorthodox way from the position of an Orthodox Jew. In addition to his interpretations of Talmudic literature, Boyarin's work contains in particular critical studies on the



cultural construction of the Jewish male and the diaspora, which for him incorporates the true essence of Judaism.

Boyarin's attitude to the Jewish diaspora may remind us of a statement in Philip Roth's novel *Operation Shylock*, if we simply substitute for "Europe" the whole of the diaspora: "The so-called normalization of the Jews was a tragic illusion from the start.... The time has come to return to the Europe that was for centuries, and remains to this day, the most authentic Jewish homeland there has ever been, the birthplace of rabbinic Judaism, Hasidic Judaism, Jewish secularism, socialism—on and on. The birthplace, of course, of Zionism, too. But Zionism has outlived its historical function. The time has come to renew in the European Diaspora our pre-eminent spiritual and cultural role."<sup>12</sup> The idealization of the diaspora and rejection of the Zionist project described here in fictional form found an echo in the writings of a few Jewish intellectuals, such as George Steiner and Hobsbawm.<sup>13</sup>

A central question for both Zionist views of history and their post-modern critics is how to deal with power. For the former, one of the basic problems of the history of the Jewish diaspora is that Jews were powerless and thus ideal objects of persecution. Only a Jewish state could bring Jews back into history as actors. For postmodern historians, of whom Boyarin is an important representative, the Jews' moral wealth derives directly from their role as a minority, which prevented them from ever being tempted to oppress other peoples.<sup>14</sup>

One characteristic that differentiates Boyarin's work from the literature discussed up to this point is the explicitly stated personal interest driving his research. The crucial point is not that Boyarin uses scholarship for his personal ends, for he would hardly be the first to have done that. The novelty is, as David Myers states, "that he does so openly and without regret, buoyed by the spirit of liberation that informs new theoretical and political currents in scholarship."<sup>15</sup> In *Unheroic Conduct*, his most provocative and comprehensive work, he leaves no doubt about what he wants to achieve through his research as a "male feminist Orthodox Jew." His interest in a new way of reading Jewish sources was triggered by his deep annoyance with the way that traditional interpretations discriminated against women and homosexuals. Boyarin was to use new interpretations to put those groups on an equal footing. He sees his writing as an act of resistance: "My endeavor is to justify my love, that is, both to explain it and to make it just. I explain my devotion in part by showing that Judaism provides exempla for another kind of masculinity.... I cannot, however, paper over, ignore, explain away, or apologize

for the oppressions of women and lesbian people that this culture has practiced, and therefore I endeavor as well to render it just by presenting a way of reading the tradition that may help it surmount or expunge—in time—that which I and many others can no longer live with. In this dual aspect of resistance to pressure from without and critique from within, my project is homologous to other political, cultural acts of resistance in the face of colonialisms.”<sup>16</sup>

Just as scholarship on Judaism revered Mendelssohn and Zionist historiography revered Herzl as their heroes, so did Boyarin find his role model. He declares that he identifies with Bertha Pappenheim, Freud’s Anna O., who was discussed earlier in another connection. “I want to claim Bertha Pappenheim here as a model for an alternative to the pseudo-objectivity of *Wissenschaft*.... Let her become the foremother of another genealogy for Jewish cultural studies, one that enacts passionate love for the culture and devotion to its continued creative and vital existence without losing sight for a moment of the necessity for equally passionate critique.”<sup>17</sup> Boyarin’s alternative to “pseudo-objective scholarship” is an empathetic approach, sympathy, and self-revelation. Thus, his text is full of expressions like “love,” “feeling,” and “passion”—it is his own emotions that he declares to be the motives of his research. The book—and we should keep in mind that it is a scholarly work, not a novel or autobiography—therefore mirrors its author’s identity: “*Unheroic Conduct* also constitutes a narrative of how I take myself to be a Jew and to be a product of my love for the Talmud and my feelings of commitment to its authority, as well as my commitment to certain ethical norms, including most prominently my feminism and my identification with gay, lesbian, and bisexual Jews (and the Queer Nation as a whole).”<sup>18</sup> In each chapter of his book, Boyarin feels obliged to identify with the person he is discussing (Pappenheim) or distance himself from that person (Freud or Herzl). For example, for Boyarin, Herzl is “indeed an antisemite,” and Zionism is one of several European “colonialist performances of male gendering.”<sup>19</sup>

Boyarin’s view of Jewish history is a radical alternative version of the Zionist view. His ideals are the muscle-lacking Jew of the diaspora, the Jewish intellectual, the homeless Jew. But it is also a radical alternative version of Jewish studies, including its last representatives in the twentieth century. Whereas for the latter, distance from the object discussed and a claim to neutrality were the presuppositions for any account of history, for Boyarin these presuppositions are identification and partiality.

The postmodern approach, with its relativization of all certainties, suited also authors of religious polemics, for whom historical scholarship

serves only as a means to an end and for whom footnotes serve only as alibis. Naturally, they had already disseminated their opinions in pseudoscholarly form, but now they could claim that any particular scholarly consensus was simply one opinion among others. This is, of course, a tendency that is not limited to Jewish historiography. Thus, Friedrich Wilhelm Graf noted in connection with postmodern scholarship on religion that “if everything is merely a text and the reader can interpret texts freely without any restriction, history becomes available everywhere. The flip side of radical constructivism is, paradoxically enough, a new substantialism that allows individual groups to mediate history in relation to their own identity-related needs.”<sup>20</sup> The following pages examine a development outside academic discourse—one that enjoys great popularity among Orthodox Jewish readers and that clarifies the new “anything goes” attitude in Jewish historiography at the end of the twentieth century.

Several critical observers recently noted a blossoming of Orthodox religious historiography in Israel and the United States that made use of external scholarly forms that were increasingly modern.<sup>21</sup> If Boyarin sees himself as an Orthodox Jew but is nonetheless widely ignored by the Orthodox, authors of Orthodox historical writings are for the most part ignored by scholarship. They perform a regular tightrope walk: on the one hand, they examine the scholarly writings of their opponents in order to refute them, but on the other hand, they do not cite these writings in order to let their authors sink into oblivion and avoid drawing attention to them. These are polemics whose ideological goal is not concealed, or concealed only when necessary: to gain cult status for their leaders, hammer obedience to the commandments into their readers, or simply accelerate the arrival of the Messiah.<sup>22</sup>

The most popular author of this kind in North America is Rabbi Berel Wein, whose work *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era, 1650–1990* has been reprinted many times since it first appeared in 1990. If there is a Jewish Orthodox master narrative of modern Jewish history from the perspective of the late twentieth century, then this is it. In some respects it reminds one of the work of Ze'ev Yavetz (see chapter 5 above) a century earlier. But it is striking that now the emphasis is on the modern period and Hebrew is replaced by English. That Wein addresses an Orthodox Jewish audience is evident from chapter headings like “TachV”Tat” (the Hebrew calendar date for the anti-Jewish massacre of 1648–49 in the Ukraine), the strong concentration on internal Jewish controversies as well as portraits of important rabbis and yeshivas, and the fact that he takes for granted that his readers are familiar with many

Talmudic scholars, whereas non-Jewish thinkers like Immanuel Kant have to be specially explained.<sup>23</sup>

The foreword makes it clear that Wein thinks he is obliged to battle a dominant secular and antireligious tradition of Jewish historiography: “Jewish historiography ... has been almost exclusively the product of secular Jews, who held a strong bias against rabbinical Torah Judaism. Thus, the irony of most Jewish history texts is that they have been written with condescension, if not hostility, to the basic beliefs and true heroes of Jewry over the centuries.... Thus, almost by default, a great deal of current ‘Jewish history’ books, articles, and texts are not truly Jewish, and are barely accurate history.”<sup>24</sup> This preliminary remark not only ignores the fact that important Jewish historians from Graetz through Roth to Katz absolutely saw themselves as religious Jews but also justifies its own theological position as uncomfortable and politically incorrect in an age of relativity—not only a “more Jewish,” but also a “more accurate” version of history.

We can see all this as the traditional way Orthodox religious authors position themselves. In our context, it is important that what a few decades ago could hardly have been written by an Orthodox author is almost taken for granted in a postmodern era. Just like academic historians, Wein claims that his subjective position is legitimate. Boyarin writes that “in my eyes, my book will have succeeded if it does no more than convince readers that the discourse I have sought is one valid among the multiple discourses of Jewish cultural life.”<sup>25</sup> Yet we detect similar notes in Wein:

All authors write from a personal bias. Mine is that I am an Orthodox Jew who believes in the divinity of Jewish tradition and in the uniqueness of the people of Israel. There exists within the Jewish people a collective memory of its history. This collective memory operates independently of research materials, books, and other “acceptable” historical evidence. One benefit of being an Orthodox Jew is having access to this memory bank of events, insights, world-views, and life-giving legends. My education in a yeshivah, my good fortune in knowing and conversing with some of the last great Eastern European rabbis, and my family tradition and its members have combined to allow me a glimpse of this collective memory treasure of Israel.<sup>26</sup>

As in Zionist historiography, for Orthodoxy as well Mendelssohn stands at the beginning of the evil of assimilation: “All of the falseness of the Enlightenment and its ‘benefits’ for Jewry would be mirrored in

the story of Mendelssohn. He loosed forces that would be destructive to myriads of Jews individually and to the Jewish people as a whole. The harshness of Jewish history's judgment upon him is a reflection of the incipient disaster that he was so prominent in fashioning. He saw himself as a hero to his people. History would cast him differently." Not only does Mendelssohn become here the founder of the Reform movement that represents assimilation and self-hatred, but between the lines can also be heard the insinuation, common in Orthodox Judaism, that the Jewish Enlightenment was ultimately responsible for the catastrophe of European Jewry in the twentieth century: "Mendelssohn and his contemporaries sowed the wind; European Jewry would reap its whirlwind two centuries later."<sup>27</sup>

Wein's description of Zionism is more complicated. When it originated it met with little enthusiasm among Orthodox Jews, but a century later it was becoming increasingly central to the Orthodox worldview. Thus, Wein depicts Herzl as far removed from true religion, but acknowledges that he was going in the right direction, just as in the eyes of Orthodox Zionism gradually became "more Jewish": "Herzl gloried in the adulation extended to him. His ego was enormous, growing into a messianic view of himself. Though he never became an observant Jew, he did become more Jewish. He began to attend synagogue (though he still could not read Hebrew) and acquaint himself with rabbis and with Jewish tradition."<sup>28</sup>

Can Boyarin's and Wein's writings really be discussed in the same chapter? The differences between them are blatant: the former works in a liberal bastion of academically certified scholarship in the United States, while the latter holds a theological position as an Orthodox rabbi. Each of them would oppose any comparison with the other. Yet they also have a few things in common: the admission that they want to introduce a particular political or theological standpoint into scholarly discourse; the rejection of what they conceive of as pseudo-scholarship that claims to be objective; the overt proclamation of heroes and villains; and finally, the justification of their religious and political positions by means of footnotes and bibliographies.

### From One Jewish Community to Many Jewish Cultures

In view of the persistent relativization resulting from the challenge of postmodernism, can a Jewish history still be written on a scholarly basis? It can, but it is usually no longer called Jewish history and must qualify its claims. The object then becomes not a Jewish history but rather many

Jewish histories. For the Israeli historian Raz-Krakotzkin, “It is better to speak of ‘Jewish historians’ as a concept that reminds us that there were different historical and cultural contexts in which Jews lived and in which they participated.”<sup>29</sup>

That is how the editors and authors of what are at this point the most recent general accounts of the Jewish past approach their subject. I am referring to the four-volume French work edited by Shmuel Trigano, *La société juive à travers l’histoire* (1992–93) and the twelve-hundred-page volume edited by David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, published in New York in 2002 by Schocken. The former is in many respects the most complex account of the Jewish past. The title already suggests that Trigano is continuing the French tradition of social history. In his foreword, he claims that the book presents “a synthesis of historical knowledge about Judaism at the end of the twentieth century.”<sup>30</sup> This synthesis clearly differs from earlier ones. Trigano is striving to provide not a chronological account but rather a “historical sociology” of the Jews.<sup>31</sup> The reader is given synchronic views into Jewish society, its representatives and institutions, rites and religious worlds, economic and cultural structures, and languages. In a certain sense, one can see it as a continuation and broadening of the methods adopted by Jacob Katz for the early modern period. Thus, it is significant that one of only two previously published contributions in the four volumes is a pathbreaking article by Katz on the institution of marriage and family life at the end of the Middle Ages. Moreover, the fact that up to this point a general work in French is the only one that devotes a central chapter to “the bonds of love” (*liens d’amour*) may confirm stereotypes regarding national characteristics.

In his systematic introduction, Trigano distances himself both from the German and American models that seek to find in the history of Judaism a specific essence of Jews, and from Israeli historians whose national point of view inclines them to represent the history of a people. In contrast, Trigano’s work seeks to study the history of neither an idea nor a people, but rather that of a society as a complex phenomenon, following it in all its transformations and forms of expression. The result is not an absolutely coherent whole but instead a colorful mosaic. The individual contributions are divided into four main periods: the biblical period, the Babylonian and medieval period, the early modern period, and the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup>

In the ideal case, these contributions are comparative studies. Thus, for example, medieval social institutions are examined in one article and modern social institutions in another, while in still others the mystics of

medieval Ashkenaz are compared with Jewish Sufis in Egypt. At the end of the work there is an overall demographic survey. But these comparative points of view cannot be maintained throughout, so that we also find narrowly defined subjects, such as the role of Jews in the economic life of Poland in the early modern period, the Sabbatean movement, or the network for rescuing Jewish children in France between 1938 and 1944. This mixture and multitude of contributions and authors (most of them come from Israel, but some come from North America and France) make the whole work more a fascinating essay collection than a unified survey.

This is not the case for *Cultures of the Jews*, which appeared in the United States a decade later. Under the editorship of David Biale, twenty-three scholars (chiefly though not exclusively historians, most of them from North America, but some from Israel and France) contributed essays on various aspects of Jewish history and culture from biblical times down to the present. It is debatable whether the result represents a definitive rejection of a master narrative of Jewish history or its most recent manifestation. In any case, this work is distinctive in its alignment of similar projects through a novel perspective that is maintained throughout.

This collective undertaking is remarkably successful in providing an account of Jewish history as a whole while not presupposing a homogeneous Jewish religion or nation. The volume is a manifesto for a scholarly critique both of twentieth-century American Jewish historiography, which characterizes Judaism mainly as a religious community, and of Zionist-influenced Jewish historiography, which describes in a teleological way the itinerary leading out of a fundamentally menaced diaspora and into a secure home. Thus, *Cultures of the Jews* also constitutes the answer to the two collective volumes on Jewish history published after the Shoah: *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, which appeared in 1949, and was edited by Louis Finkelstein and written chiefly by American historians and scholars in religious studies, and the *History of the Jewish People*, which appeared in 1969, and was edited by H. H. Ben-Sasson and written by historians at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup>

The half century that separates the publication of Finkelstein's work from Biale's can be discerned not only in the differing scholarly horizons but also clearly in their situation in completely different social and political debates. Whereas the contributions to Biale's work published at the beginning of the twenty-first century focus on themes in Jewish culture that were earlier considered marginal and take self-critical positions regarding disturbing questions in Jewish history, Finkelstein's work was

still written largely in terms of the questions debated in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as practiced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The cleft that separates *Cultures of the Jews* from Zionist historical narrative is different, but hardly less deep, than the one that separates it from the American narrative point of view in the 1940s. Here too, the title is programmatic: it expresses the impossibility of speaking of a single Jewish culture or history. In his preface, Biale explicitly criticizes the Jerusalem historians' attempt to represent Jewish history as oriented nationally and teleologically toward the return to Israel. In opposition to their "sense of Jewish difference and isolation," for Biale Jewish history is relative: "The Jews throughout the ages believed themselves to have a common national biography and a common culture."<sup>34</sup> There may not in fact have been a Jewish people and a Jewish religion. But the subjective conviction, shared in most times by most Jews, that they were part of a common history, justifies for Biale the collective enterprise of bringing the cultures of the Jews together in a single volume.

One more thing distinguishes *Cultures of the Jews* from the American narrative point of view in the 1940s and the Jerusalem school of the 1960s. If at the beginning of the twentieth century one could still draw a distinction between an Eastern European and a German view of Jewish history, and at the middle of the century one could still distinguish between historians who were oriented toward Israel and those who were oriented toward the diaspora, at the turn of the twenty-first century the boundary lines run elsewhere. Both American and Israeli scholars contributed to Biale's *Cultures of the Jews*, and representatives of both groups are among the supporters and critics of the post-Zionists. Israel's so-called new historians often teach and publish in England or the United States, and historians of American or European background teach at Israeli universities. It would be impossible to draw a boundary line here. Instead, the latter runs between those who accept and those who reject postmodern and deconstructive ideas and their application to Jewish history.

Biale's enterprise is influenced by postmodern questions: he studies the colonialization of oppressed peoples, thereby sounding the depths of the question of power in the relationship between Jews and their environment: "The production of Jewish culture and identity in such circumstances can never be separated from the power relations between Jews and their neighbors."<sup>35</sup> In a lecture on the conception of his work, Biale explained that "following historians such as Carlo Ginzburg and literary critics like Stephen Greenblatt, our goal is to show the circulation of



culture between Jews and non-Jews and between different groups within the Jewish world. The focus is on ruptures and discontinuities and on the differences between Jewish cultures in different places and ages.”<sup>36</sup> In the preface to the volume itself, Biale acknowledges that he has adopted a subjective and time-bound standpoint. He does not want to make any claim to absoluteness; instead, he sees his work as the expression of a specific time and view: “The present work is also the product of a particular time. Ours is a self-conscious age, when we raise questions about old ideologies and ‘master’ narratives and no longer assume as unchanging or monolithic categories like ‘nation’ and ‘religion.’”<sup>37</sup>

The debate about *Cultures of the Jews* shows that at the beginning of the twenty-first century and outside Israel, the old questions about how Jewish history should be presented, how Jews are defined, or how successful or unsuccessful their integration into their environments was have lost none of their relevance or explosiveness. *Cultures of the Jews* thus stands not at the beginning but rather at the end of a long-term historiographical development.

Just as Finkelstein’s work reflects a view of history already based on the nineteenth-century scholarly tradition and Ben-Sasson’s account amounts to the summation of a long period of Zionist historiography, Biale’s *Cultures of the Jews* summarizes more than two decades of counterhistory connected with notions such as new cultural history, structuralism, feminism and postcolonialism, hybridness, and “boundary crossing.” Without numerous preliminary studies, especially by American historians and scholars in religious studies, this summary would hardly have been possible. However, it must be emphasized that although *Cultures of the Jews* is crucially influenced by the “cultural turn,” unlike Boyarin’s work it is not a radical postmodernist manifesto.

Four key points are striking in this most recent synthesis of Jewish history and culture. First, there is the relativization of apparently given categories such as “nation” and “religion,” which are now described rather as constructions and inventions. Second, there is a strong emphasis on integrative elements such as syntheses and symbioses, often dressed in terms of interaction and *convivencia*. Third, heretofore neglected subjects such as non-European Jews and Jewish folk beliefs are now integrated. Fourth, there is a self-critical tone, including a discussion of medieval anti-Christian polemics, meant to refute any accusation of apologetics inherent in much of previous Jewish historiography.

Influenced by the theories of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, who in their research on nationalism describe nations as “imagined com-

munities” and investigate the invention of traditions, in the history of Jewish cultures we also find criticism of the idea that the Jews form an “organic community.” The title is not *The History of the Jews* or *A General History of the Jewish People* but rather *Cultures of the Jews*. The new cultural historiography has left its traces here, but the use of the plural also makes the relativist point of view clear. Attempts to find a Jewish essence, as undertaken by representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* or by Zionists a century later, are rejected. Judaism can be described only in the plural, as the multiplicity of Jewish cultures.

From the outset, religious or ethnic Jewish characteristics are represented as constructs elaborated by later historians or collective memory. “The Exodus and the Cultural Construction of Israel” is the title of a central section on the development of communities in which it is explained that “recent research has demonstrated that culture and ethnicity are more matters of belief and custom than they are proof of common descent.”<sup>38</sup> The history of the Jews in antiquity is described on this assumption. Erich Gruen, a proponent of the idea of Jews’ successful acculturation in the Hellenistic world, titles a section of his contribution “The Jewish Construction of Greek Culture and Ethnicity.”<sup>39</sup> In his own contribution on the history of the Jews in eastern Europe, Biale speaks of the “Invention of East European Orthodoxy.”<sup>40</sup>

If nations and communities are invented, there is an immediate connection between their culture and neighboring cultures. Thus, most of the illustrations in the volume are intended to show the close relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures. In connection with biblical culture, the Syrian goddess Kadesh is depicted, along with images of Greek motifs in a Jewish burial chamber in Judea. Rabbinical culture in Babylonia is illustrated not by a page from the Talmud but instead with two “incantation bowls” and a magic dish with Aramaic inscriptions, which Jews had written in order to heal non-Jews. A letter of Isaak ben Esra shows that his cursive writing can hardly be distinguished from Arabic. In a photograph of an Ethiopian Jew working on his pottery, the man can hardly be seen as a Jew, and the last section on American Jewish culture begins with a drawing taken from a Superman comic book.<sup>41</sup>

However, not only the illustrations but the texts themselves seek to prove the hybrid character of Jewish cultures. Concerning Hellenized Jews, we read, “The construct of Jewish identity, an ongoing, complex, and shifting process, was tightly bound up with the construct of Greek ethnicity—that is, the character values, and beliefs of the Greek *ethnos* in Jewish eyes.”<sup>42</sup> The Jews of Babylonia who created the Talmud can-

not be represented as an authentic Jewish community “if we accept the multiplicity of cultural influences all contributing to the uniquely Babylonian version of rabbinic society.... [T]hey almost certainly grafted at least some aspects of the local Sassanian legal process to the mass of Palestinian material that they succeeded in co-opting and making their own. As for popular culture, here too they forged an amalgam between ideas passed on from Palestine through the same rabbinic pipeline that transmitted legal materials and the surrounding Iranian environment that supplied them with a wealth of religious and spiritual imagery.”<sup>43</sup>

This description is quite different from the one in the *History of the Jewish People* edited by Ben-Sasson in Jerusalem. The difference is already visible in the chapter headings: the corresponding discussion in Ben-Sasson was written by the Jerusalem historian Schmu'el Safrai and is titled, using Jewish concepts, “The Era of the Mishnah and Talmud,” whereas the chapter titles in *Cultures of the Jews* direct attention to the non-Jewish environment: “Hellenistic Judaism,” “Jewish Culture in Greco-Roman Palestine,” and “Babylonian Rabbinic Culture.” The introductions to the chapters also distinguish the two works from one another. Safrai’s text in the Jerusalem history puts special emphasis on the central importance of the Land of Israel: “The Place of the Land of Israel in the Life of the Nation.” In contrast, in *Cultures of the Jews*, the reference is usually to Palestine and not to the Land of Israel, and in Biale’s view the “life of the nation” is not a legitimate concept. With respect to content, there are also significant shifts in emphasis in Safrai’s account: “During most of this era, however, the main centre of Jewish life remained situated in the homeland. The Jewish community was one of the largest and continued to serve as the focus to the nation’s hope of returning to its ancient site and its former glory.” For Safrai, the idea of a return to the homeland, which always remained associated with the earlier splendor, was central for Jews in the diaspora. He puts it still more clearly: “The Palestinian community remained the leaven that produced political and military fermentation and kept the hope of redemption alive.”<sup>44</sup>

What a contrast we find in Gruen’s contribution to *Cultures of the Jews*. After emphasizing that Jews willingly went into diaspora long before the destruction of the Second Temple, he leaves no doubt about the centrality of the diaspora: “The Temple still stood, a reminder of the hallowed past, and a Jewish regime had authority in Palestine. Yet the Jews of the Diaspora, from Italy to Iran, far outnumbered those in the homeland. Although Jerusalem loomed large in their self-perception as a nation, only a few of them had seen it, and few were likely to.”<sup>45</sup> How

much more was Palestine sidelined in Jewish history after the destruction of Jerusalem! Whereas Safrai speaks of the transition from an “era of the Exile, in the fullest and most bitter sense of the term,” Gruen describes a diaspora whose residents turned their eyes toward Jerusalem, but seldom used their legs to emigrate there.<sup>46</sup> Gruen’s depiction of Hellenistic Judaism corresponds to the perspective of contemporary American Judaism, which shows its solidarity with Israel and provides it with financial support, but only in rare cases regards it as its homeland: “Diaspora Jews did not and would not turn their backs on Jerusalem, which remained the principal emblem of their faith. Their fierce commitment to the tithe delivered that message unequivocally. But the gesture did not signify a desire for the ‘Return.’ It rendered the Return unnecessary.... Jerusalem had an irresistible and undiminished claim on the emotions of Diaspora Jews; it was indeed a critical piece of their identity. But home was elsewhere.”<sup>47</sup>

The structural difference between the two works with regard to the Middle Ages is also noteworthy. In Ben-Sasson’s work geographic distinctions disappear. The various chapters are defined in accord not with the regions in which Jews live but rather with themes such as vocational structures, community organization, or cultural achievements, as if discussing a worldwide, unified culture. In contrast, Biale organizes the contributions to *Cultures of the Jews* geographically: Arab, Spanish, central European, eastern European, and Italian Jews each have their own chapter.

While Ben-Sasson emphasizes the independence, mentality, and distinct character of Iberian Jewry, *Cultures of the Jews* speaks of convivencia and a Spanish-Jewish symbiosis. As Raymond Scheindlin writes, “The Jews were similar to the Muslims in most aspects of style, interests, ideas, and taste, and their leaders were affected by the same intellectual trends in theology, philosophy, and literature.” On the other hand, the discriminatory laws were hardly relevant, since they were seldom observed. “Nobody minded the rule requiring distinguishing clothing, because that had been customary anyway, and it was hardly enforced in the early centuries.” In all, Scheindlin brings back to life a Jewish-Muslim golden age symbiosis in all its splendor: “A community that was on the whole prosperous, little subject to persecution, economically well integrated with the environment, and self-confident to the point of being able to adjust to both the external and internal features of its environment without fear of acculturation.”<sup>48</sup>

Ben-Sasson acknowledges that Jews were better off in the Islamic world than in the Christian one, but argues that it was only a matter of different

degrees of persecution and discrimination: “Nevertheless, in many lands and in many periods the Jews suffered hostility and humiliation under Moslem rule as well, though to a lesser extreme than in the Christian realms.”<sup>49</sup> He recognizes that Spanish Jewish philosophers and writers wrote their works in Arabic, but stresses that they also wrote Arabic in Hebrew script, and that Arabic never displaced Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>50</sup>

Still greater is the contrast between the ways that the two works treat the Ashkenazi Middle Ages. The author of the corresponding contribution in *Cultures of the Jews*, Ivan Marcus of Yale University, titles it “A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis,” and begins, characteristically, with the observation that “the Jews of early Christian Europe did not live in ghettos but mixed socially with their numerous Christian neighbors.”<sup>51</sup> In contrast, Ben-Sasson opens his introduction to the Middle Ages with the remark that under both Islamic and Christian rule, Jews had to deal above all with “persecution and humiliation.”<sup>52</sup> Thus the first chapter in the Jerusalem history, in which Jews’ relationships with Muslims and Christians are discussed, is titled “Effects of Religious Animosity on the Jews.”<sup>53</sup> This contains long lists of the persecutions and humiliations connected with discriminatory laws among the Visigoths, the massacre by the Crusaders, and the legends of ritual murder and poisoned wells.

Marcus reacts against precisely this way of seeing things when, like earlier opponents of lachrymose history, he describes persecution as an occasional deviation from the norm of living together in harmony. For him, the heart of the matter lies elsewhere: “Although many writers have emphasized the violence and insecurity that beset the Jews of Ashkenaz, Jews would not have survived there, let alone created what they left us, had that been the main story. Christian persecution was usually the exception rather than the rule, and it characterized some times, not others. The norm may be described as different patterns of social mixing between Jews and Christians.” As in Gruen’s discussion of the age of Hellenization and Scheindlin’s contribution on the golden age in Spain, in Marcus as well we find the picture of an acculturated community that is integrated into the life of its environment, but not at the price of self-sacrifice. For this he coins the expression “inward acculturation.”<sup>54</sup>

Another example may further clarify the contrast between the two master narratives: on the one hand, the dark picture of a ghettoized minority in eastern Europe, culturally distinct from its environment and living in the shadow of persecutions, and on the other hand, a Polish Judaism that was closely connected with its Christian neighbors and, except for occasional outbreaks of violence, flourishing. For Ettinger, writing from

Jerusalem, the Jewish history of eastern Europe is divided into two parts: the internal development, which had no connection with its environment, and the external history, which is chiefly one of persecution.

In contrast, Biale emphasizes commonalities even in Poland: “But Polish and Jewish culture had more in common than collective identification of the dominated people with the dominators. Both cultures—and the cultures of most of the other minority groups in the Commonwealth—were part of a larger European heritage, and thus many of the axioms that shaped daily life were common property.... Jews and Christians agreed on such fundamental political concepts as the function of local political leadership.... With regard to economic life, both Jews and Christians believed in the regnant notion of a regulated market.... Another example of shared cultural axioms is the sphere of what is usually called popular religion.”<sup>55</sup>

In *Cultures of the Jews*, we find for the first time an extensive discussion of the modern history of the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East that from Jost through Graetz to Ben-Sasson had been treated stingily. In Ettinger’s synthesis only a few pages had been devoted to the history of Moroccan, Egyptian, Yemenite, Iraqi, or Iranian Jews in the modern period. As Ettinger’s biographer Barnai writes, this neglect helped Ettinger to play down differences between Jewish communities in the diaspora and characterize them as more homogeneous: “Ettinger clearly characterized the ‘Jerusalem School’s’ conception of the essence of Jewish history and projected it onto the history of the Jews in Islamic lands.... Ettinger attacked anyone who questioned the ‘continuity and unity’ of Jewish history ‘from the Judean desert to Stalin.’”<sup>56</sup>

In order to balance the traditional deficit of research on Jews in Islamic countries, *Cultures of the Jews* goes almost to the opposite extreme. German Jews are now discussed together with other Jewish communities in the chapter on central and western Europe. On the other hand, there are separate contributions on Jews in the Ottoman Empire, Jews in North Africa, Jewish cultures from Yemen to Afghanistan, and Ethiopian Jews. In terms of pages, for the modern period about sixty-five are devoted to the Jews of western and central Europe, whereas about two hundred pages are devoted to Jews in Africa and the Near East.

Yet *Cultures of the Jews* is not concerned solely with a geographic rebalancing. Scholem’s criticism that *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was always interested only in what happens in the “salon” and not in what happens in the “basement” resonates here as well. The center of interest is not high culture, as in Jost and Graetz, or community organization and

structure, as in Dubnow and Ben-Sasson, but rather the history of everyday life, relationships with non-Jews, and popular culture. Thus, there is a chapter on the subject of “The ‘Other’ Israel: Folk Cultures in the Modern State of Israel,” and the treatment of modern American Judaism is strongest in its large sections on popular culture.

A last innovative aspect of this book has to do with Scholem’s critique of the basic apologetic attitude of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Biale, who is the author of a biography of Scholem, did not want to expose himself to this reproach, and therefore deals with subjects that had not been discussed in Jewish histories written for the general reader for fear that they might lead to anti-Jewish interpretations. An example is Marcus’s contribution on the “Christian-Jewish Symbiosis” in the Middle Ages. He provides an unsparing analysis of anti-Christian polemics in the Talmud and Midrash, in which, for instance, Mary is described as immoral and ritually impure. He then discusses explicitly the “Counter-Gospels” of the Jewish Middle Ages: the “Life of Jesus Narratives” (*Toldot Yeshu*) that depict Jesus and his family in dark tones.<sup>57</sup> In this connection it should also be mentioned that there is no separate chapter on Jewish philosophy and intellectual history, although a chapter more than fifty pages long is devoted to the subject of magic and folklore. The subjects that according to Scholem had been neglected by scholarship on Judaism for apologetic reasons now for the first time find their place in a general history.

Not surprisingly, this attention to subjects that were supposed to be marginal met with significant criticism. With regard to the Middle Ages and the early modern period, the Israeli historian David Malkiel noted that this volume provided “neither an attempt at *histoire totale*, à la Ben-Sasson, nor a panoramic portrayal of Jewish cultural history, à la Finkelstein. It is new and it is history but it is not a new history; but rather a longitudinal exploration of a particular theme.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Malkiel’s American colleague Allan Arkush remarked in reference to the modern period that “it is not a replacement for previous cultural histories of the Jews but a highly instructive supplement to them.”<sup>59</sup>

The most acerbic critic turned out to be the New York-based scholar of Jewish literature David Roskies. In his view, although the volume makes such efforts to show that every form of authentic Jewish culture is merely constructed, and that Jewish culture always contains elements of other cultures, the existence of these other cultures is never questioned: “Everything associated with the talmudic rabbis ... is explained ... in reference to the Jewish interaction with Hellenism; only Hellenism itself, the quintessential ‘Other,’ is presented to us as something incontrovert-

ibly real and self-contained. And so it goes ... we see the old ‘hegemonic’ idea that there is something consistently and identifiably ‘Jewish’ about the Jews overshadowed by the giddy spectacle of plural influences, by syncretism and folk practices and magic, until both Jewish body and the Jewish soul stand before us draped in foreign garments and adorned with amulets galore.” Roskies concludes that Biale’s representation of Jewish cultures, which is characterized by “hybridity” and “boundary crossing,” is nothing more than a return to a worldview of passive Jewish history, in which Jews are not the subjects but the objects of history, and in which “Jews have had little or nothing to say for *themselves*. Throughout their sojourn on earth, one cannot but conclude, they have been mostly reactive, bouncing off superior cultures and bringing little of their own to the table. To be unkind, one might even say that this volume, with its at times almost parodic aping of the academic fashions of the ‘Other,’ offers a particularly dispiriting example of the same alleged syndrome.”<sup>60</sup> In response, Biale accused Roskies of clinging to a “highly traditional view of what constitutes historical writing,” and of wanting to revive the concept of “the great ages and ideas of Jewish history.”<sup>61</sup>

Whereas each of the previous chapters was preceded by pictures whose creators portrayed certain aspects of Jewish society, in conclusion a self-portrait seems appropriate. Insofar as historians are becoming increasingly aware how much their own personality shapes their work, they also recognize that they portray part of themselves in their writings. The timeless self-portrait of Jankel Adler (1895–1949), who was born in Poland, became one of the founders of the Rheinische Sezession, and until 1933 taught at the Düsseldorf Academy of Arts, is open to multiple interpretations. In the face broken up into different colors and shapes, we may see the way the painter is torn between an optimistic and a pessimistic worldview, or between a universal identity and a particular one marked by the Hebrew characters. Like so many historical sources, this picture invites interpretation by observers—and depending on his own “viewpoint,” the latter can see either one or the other in it.





Fig. 6.1. Jankel Adler, *Selbstbildnis*, ca. 1926. Mixed media on canvas. Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

## EPILOGUE

“TELL ME WHO YOU ARE and I’ll tell you what kind of history you write.” At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this might be the answer to Lord Acton’s demand that historians not make known their nation, religion, or party affiliation. If today we look critically on historical narratives of the Jewish past, it is of crucial importance to know in what time and country particular historians lived, what conception of Judaism they had, and which political movement they embraced.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* conceived Jewish history chiefly as a religious community. This view of Judaism was followed by its nationalization in two variations: on the one hand, in the sense of an autonomous nation in the diaspora, and on the other hand, in the sense of a nation bound to the Land of Israel. All three versions sought to work out a consistent essence of Judaism.

The two basic upheavals in twentieth-century Jewish society—the annihilation of a large part of European Jewry and the foundation of the State of Israel—have led to a crucial change in the view of Jewish history. With the growing literature on both the Nazi persecution of the Jews and the history of Israel, new areas of research have been opened up that have become more wide-ranging than all other partial aspects of Jewish history, and could not be included in this study. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, the view of the whole course of Jewish history has been altered retrospectively by the same two crucial events. It is an old rule among historians that past periods should be viewed from the point of view of their contemporaries and not through the lenses of later generations. However, whether we wish to or not, we cannot erase our knowledge of subsequent events.<sup>1</sup> To give only one example: in Germany, most historians who since the late 1960s have taken up subjects in Jewish history have tried to determine how the emancipation of the Jews failed and why a militant, racist antisemitism triumphed. Other aspects, such as those connected with the internal development of German Judaism, have retreated into the background. This does not mean that these questions were less important for the people living in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but only that they are less important for the historians shaped by the experience of the Shoah.

In the twenty-first century, ideological positioning has not entirely disappeared, though the boundary line now is the acceptance or rejection of a postmodern view. If historians shaped by postmodernism still write only “small” narratives and make their subjective standpoint more explicit, this does not mean that their writings are less ideologically motivated than those of their predecessors. We should rid ourselves of the notion that a historian has to come from Mars in order to write a useful history of earthly conflicts. Then we can also accept the fact that a convinced Zionist can write a history of Jews that is just as acceptable as one written by a historian who grew up with Christian religious ideas, that a religious Jew can write the history of the Jewish Enlightenment, and an atheist can write one about the Spanish Inquisition. Historians’ personalities always influence their portraits of another time. What characterizes useful historical work is not that its authors have, as it were, erased their own identity but rather that they have been able to take a certain distance on their objects without denying their own standpoints, and that they can put themselves in different historical positions. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a good historian is still one who is able to provide exciting analyses of interesting sources, lay out an innovative theoretical approach, and write in a literarily appealing way. Even if, in a period marked by skepticism, historiography often writes its own obituary, historians that meet these criteria still seem to be quite alive and enjoy great popularity. Despite all the postmodern and anti-postmodern prophecies of doom, no end of Jewish historiography is yet in sight. Never before have there been so many academic institutions where this subject is taught and studied. Never before has so much scholarly literature on this subject been written. Still, what has in fact come to an end is a form of historiography that tried to draw the most monolithic picture of Jews and Judaism possible.

The break with the traditional transmission of history goes considerably deeper than a mere dissolution of the master narrative into smaller narrative models might suggest. Whereas at the beginning of the nineteenth century historiography in the form of wide-ranging books with notes and bibliographies replaced a traditional religious form of the culture of memory, two centuries later a paradigm change of a quite different kind seems to have occurred. A constantly growing number of people receive their knowledge of history no longer from books, but from museum visits, films, and the Internet. Other modes of transmission and new media have not entirely replaced traditional historiography but instead have appeared alongside them and will probably have even more appeal

in the future. However, here too the history of the Jews plays a special role. If we consider the numbers of visitors at the Jewish Museum in Berlin or the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, and the prominence of Jewish themes in films and on Internet sites on Jews in history and the present, the unbroken presence of Jews and Judaism in the age of new media seems to be confirmed despite the constantly declining percentage of Jews in the world population.

This book has tried to show that over many generations, historians of the Jewish past bore a considerable responsibility for the formation of the Jewish present and future. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, when most Jews live in countries that recognize them as citizens with equal rights, historians are less than ever creators of slogans for a national, socialist, or liberal society. However, antisemitism has not disappeared, the Nazi genocide is denied in large parts of the world, and the existence of the State of Israel is still in danger. In view of this situation, historians have now taken on a new role. After the death of the last eyewitnesses, historians have a special duty to analyze the greatest crime of the twentieth century, along with its roots. They are also asked to provide the background that led to the foundation of a Jewish state. Even if they do not put themselves in the service of this or that political or ideological movement, and want to pursue knowledge for its own sake, they still have to be aware that the results of their research will often be given a political interpretation.

Now as then, historians must keep one thing in mind: they can be “prophets of the past,” but they have no claim to interpret the future better than others. So far as this is concerned, historians, like others, should remember the well-known passage in the Talmud (*Bava batra*, 12b), in which Rabbi Yohanan warns, “Since the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken away from the prophets and given to fools and little children.”

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## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION: VIEWPOINTS ON JEWISH HISTORY

1. The sentence “Der Historiker ist ein rückwärts gekehrter Prophet” appears in Schlegel’s *Fragmente* (1798). Reprinted in Schlegel, *Der Historiker als rückwärts gekehrter Prophet*, 161.

2. Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 405.

3. *Ibid.*, 392–93. See Schweppenhäuser, “Historical Materialism?”

4. Benjamin and Scholem, *Briefwechsel*, 105 (postscript to a letter from September 19, 1933). The picture hung in Scholem’s apartment in Jerusalem until his widow donated it to the Israel Museum in 1989. See Alter, *Necessary Angels*, 113.

5. Of course, this problem is not limited to Jewish historiography. On the relationship between objectivity and partiality in historiography, see, for example, Faber, Kocka, and Koselleck, *Theorie der Geschichte*, vol. 3. An outstanding case study on this issue dealing with U.S. historians of the twentieth century is provided by Novick, *That Noble Dream*.

6. Michael, *I. M. Jost*; Michael, *Heinrich Graetz*; Pyka, *Jüdische Identität*; Seltzer, “Simon Dubnow”; Hilbrenner, “Simon Dubnov’s Master Narrative”; Libelles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*; Harris, *The Pride of Jacob*.

7. The pathbreaking study on the relationship between Jewish historiography and memory from the biblical period to the modern age is Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor*. On Jewish historical conceptions of the Enlightenment, especially in Eastern Europe, see Feiner, *Haskalah and History*. A descriptive account of the most important stages in Jewish historiography down to the end of the nineteenth century is now available in Hebrew: Michael, *Ha-ketiva ha-historit ha-yehudit*. Analyses covering several periods are offered by the following essay collections: Baron, *History and Jewish Historians*; Funkenstein, *Perceptions*; Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity*; Schorsch, *From Text to Context*; Yerushalmi, *Ein Feld in Anatot*. Fundamental texts of Jewish historiography are reprinted and commented on in Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History*; Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*. Particular aspects of modern Jewish historiography are dealt with in Brenner and Myers, *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute*; Ehrenfreund, *Mémoire juive et nationalité allemande*; Hödl, *Historisches Bewusstsein*; Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*; Myers, *Resisting History*; Myers and Ruderman, *The Jewish Past Revisited*; Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*; Wyrwa, *Judentum und Historismus*; Zimmermann, Stern, and Salmon, *Iyunim be-historiografia*. The nine-volume series edited by Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Historiker*, does not include even the classical representative of Jewish historiography, Heinrich Graetz, who was certainly also a German historian.

8. Discussions of the theory of historiography are now extremely numerous. I mention only a few that are particularly relevant here: Conrad and Conrad, eds., *Die Nation schreiben*; Evans, *In Defense of History*; Faber, Kocka, and Ko-

selleck, *Theorie der Geschichte*; Gardiner, *Theories of History*; Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*; Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme*.

9. Garcia Márquez, *Living to Tell the Tale*, dedication page.

10. Johann Martin Chladenius, *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft*, Leipzig, 1752, 100f., quoted in Koselleck, "Standortbindung und Zeitlichkeit," 26.

11. On the development of national historiography in the course of the nineteenth century, see Berger, Donovan, and Passmore, *Writing National Histories*. On the relativization of national narrative, see especially Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*; Brubaker, *Nationalism Re-framed*. Alternative approaches to an explanation are found in Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. On the political instrumentalization of history, see Wolfrum, *Geschichte als Waffe*; Bock and Wolfrum, eds., *Umkämpfte Vergangenheit*. On Yugoslavia in particular, see Pavkovic, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*, 3–34; Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, especially 115–40. On Czechoslovakia and particularly the national significance of religious figures, see Paces, "Religious Heroes for a Secular State." On historiography after World War II, see Hadler, "Drachen und Drachentöter."

12. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12:478, 482.

13. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 13. In his autobiography, Hobsbawm defines himself as a "non-Jewish Jew," and writes concerning his relationship to Judaism: "I have no emotional obligation to the practices of an ancestral religion and even less so to the small, militarist, culturally disappointing and politically aggressive nation-state which asks for my solidarity on racial grounds. I do not even have to fit in with the most fashionable posture of the turn of the new century, that of 'the victim,' the Jew who, on the strength of the Shoah ... asserts unique claims on the world's conscience as a victim of persecution." Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, 24.

14. The question of whether the problem of objectivity is particularly great in Jewish history was already raised by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in 1969, at the first meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies: "I told my colleagues that I did not know why objectivity was a greater problem for Jewish historians than for French and Russian historians writing about Napoleon. I would say the same today." Yerushalmi, "Jüdische Historiographie," 277n9.

15. Morris, "Historia obyektivit," 41. On revisions in relation to his own standpoint, see chapter 6 below.

16. A series of studies demonstrate this phenomenon in the Central European context. For a recent example, see Elon, *The Pity of It All*. The claim that a high percentage of Jews participating in certain areas of public and intellectual life was a situation not limited to the Western world is supported by Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, with specific reference to the Soviet Union; he offers some astounding parallels.

17. Diner, "Ubiquitär in Zeit und Raum."

18. Berlin, "Benjamin Disraeli," 1.

19. Yerushalmi, "Postscript," 113.

20. Dawidowicz, *What Is the Use of Jewish History?* 4.

21. Endelman, "Introduction," 8. Somewhat earlier, the same author put this differently: "To be sure, until recent times, most works of Jewish history, whatever their focus, served apologetic as well as scholarly ends." Endelman, "Writing English Jewish History," 623. Among many similar statements, see also Paula Hyman: "The historiography of modern Jewry has been particularly sensitive to the ideological, political, and cultural trends of modern Jewish life, even as it has become firmly anchored in the academy." Hyman, "The Ideological Transformation of Modern Jewish Historiography," 143. In 1927 Simon Dubnow already had to admit that in Jewish history, "the production of complete agreement between the ideas of the past and historical reality" encountered especially great difficulties. Dubnow, "Geschichtsschreibung, Jüdische."

22. See also the recent discussion in Sand, *Matai*.

23. Brenner, "Religion, Nation oder Stamm."

24. Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, 66.

25. Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 67, 69.

26. Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, 1:55. Cf. Yerushalmi, *Spinoza und das Überleben des jüdischen Volkes*.

27. Quoted from a manuscript in the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar, in Naumann, *Schillers Werke*, 135.

28. Jarausch and Sabrow, "'Meistererzählung'—Zur Karriere eines Begriffs," 16.

29. Berger, "Geschichten von der Nation," 56–59. Regarding the question of whether a historian was allowed to take no standpoint of this kind, Sidney Hook once remarked that "the possession of bias or passion on the part of the historian does not preclude the possibility of his achieving objectivity in testing his hypothesis any more than a physician's passion to relieve men from the possibility of a discovery of a medical ... truth." Beard and Hook, "Problems of Terminology," 126.

30. See Schwartz, "From the Maccabees to Masada."

31. The formulation "In the beginning was ..." corresponds to the famous opening of Thomas Nipperdey's two-volume history of modern German history, *Deutsche Geschichte*. On the periodization of Jewish history, see the fundamental article "Where Does the Modern Period in Jewish History Begin?" in Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity*, 21–31; see also Dünaburg (Dinur), "Ha-'zemanim he-hadashim' be-toldot yisrael."

32. In this vein, Dubnow's three-volume *Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (published in Russian in 1914 and in German from 1920) begins with the French Revolution.

33. "For the Jew, too, there was a preliminary economic emancipation, beginning early in Italy and continuing during the seventeenth century in Holland, as well as the intellectual emancipation in these two countries, later climaxed by the Berlin and East European Haskalah." Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 1st ed., 2:165. Later on, he explains that "the Italian and Dutch Haskalah laid solid foundations for the broad evolution of Jewish Enlightenment. It has become customary to date the Jewish 'Aufklärung' from Mendelssohn and modern Hebrew literature from Moses Hayyim Luzzatto. But all the fundamental tendencies of the Haskalah, such as learning, a 'purified' Hebrew tongue, historicism



and the revolt of the individual against the communal power, had become more and more marked in Italy and Holland long before Mendelssohn. Compared with Leone Ebreo and Spinoza, the sage of Dessau appears to be more of a medieval apologist than a modern secular philosopher." *Ibid.*, 3:212n13.

34. Dinur, *Yisrael ba-gola*.

## CHAPTER 1: JEWISH HISTORY AS HISTORY OF RELIGION

1. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 57–75; Awerbuch, *Zwischen Hoffnung und Vernunft*.

2. See Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies*; Veltri and Necker, *Gottes Sprache in der philologischen Werkstatt*; Coudert and Shoulson, *Hebraica veritas?*

3. An initial six-volume work, the much-respected edition titled *Histoire de la religion des Juifs*, appeared in Rotterdam in 1706–7, and a complete English translation (*The History of the Jews from Jesus Christ to the Present Time*) was published in London in 1708. Without Basnage's consent and without naming him as author, a greatly abridged seven-volume edition was published in France in 1710, providing the occasion for a nearly five-hundred-page reply by the author. The fifteen-volume edition of 1716, which was published in Dutch in 1726–27, was Basnage's definitive version of Jewish history.

4. The quotations are found in Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, 1:i–vi; they are also partly reproduced in Cerny, *Theology, Politics, and Letters*, 186f. The first quotation is related to the reactions to the first edition of 1706. On the historical situation of Basnage's Jewish history, see Yardeni, "New Concepts of Post-Commonwealth Jewish History," 245–58; Elukin, "Jacques Basnage and the 'History of the Jews'"; Popkin, "Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs*."

5. An edition with commentary by Chaim Homer appeared in Jerusalem in 1964 and contains the bibliographical data for all editions of the work. On the work, see Fuks, "Menachem Man ben Salomon Halevi"; Fuks, "Yiddish Historiography." According to Shmuel Feiner, the work went through sixteen editions in Hebrew. See Feiner, "Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historiography," 20.

6. See details in Raz-Krakotzkin, "Yitsuga," 1–54.

7. The first U.S. edition appeared in 1812 under the title *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Nineteenth Century*. On this work, see Schmidt, *A Passionate Usefulness*, 237–53.

8. Adams, *The History of the Jews*, 1:90.

9. How closely the first steps taken by Jewish historiography were connected with the demands of political emancipation can be seen in the writings of the Christian spokespeople for emancipation who were concerned to achieve political goals through a balanced account of Jewish history. The best example of this is Aretin, *Geschichte der Juden in Baiern*. This is a recommendation prepared for the government regarding the emancipation of the Jews, which Aretin favors. Thus, his book contains "some important and heretofore little-known contributions to the history of fanaticism" (iii). In an appendix, he published a drama performed in the Bavarian town of Regen in 1800, "Der Religionseyfer oder die Ausrottung der Juden in Deggendorf" ("Religious Zeal, or the Eradication of Jews in Deggendorf"), on which he commented, "We owe it to our current

wise government that not only have all such popular plays been abolished, but also their producers and even the occasions for such plays are steadily becoming fewer" (iv). In all, Aretin's work is a relatively sober inventory of the Jewish past and present in Bavaria.

10. Adams, *The History of the Jews*, 1:v–vii; here, I cite the preface to the German edition written by the (anonymous) translator. In the eighteenth century, two histories of the Jews by Danish Christian authors appeared in German translation: Holberg, *Jüdische Geschichte*; Bastholm, *Jüdische Geschichte*.

11. Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 2:179.

12. Quoted in Erb and Bergmann, *Die Nachtseite der Judenemanzipation*, 175. See also Brumlik, *Deutscher Geist und Judenhaß*, 75–131.

13. See Feiner, *Haskalah and History*; Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*.

14. [Wessely], *Worte der Wahrheit*, 25f.

15. Löwisohn, *Vorlesungen über die neuere Geschichte der Juden*, 3.

16. "In those years, when European historiography was pursuing new paths and moving towards academic institutionalization, the study of documents, and the development of romantic and nationalistic concepts, the maskilim were relying exclusively on secondary historiography, which was still following eighteenth-century trends." Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 167.

17. "Hokhma" literally means wisdom, but in that time it was also used to refer to intellectual activity.

18. Graetz used a similar formulation in the introduction to his *Geschichte der Juden* (1:xxxii–xxxiii): "Even someone who does not believe in miracles must admit that there is something miraculous about the historical career of the Jewish people. It shows not merely growth, blossoming, and withering, like the history of other peoples, but also the extraordinary phenomenon that the withering was followed by a new greening and blossoming, and that this rise and decline was thrice repeated."

19. On Krochmal, see Harris's biography, *Nachman Krochmal*; see also the still-rewarding article by Rawidowicz, "Nachman Krochmal als Historiker."

20. Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 56.

21. Krochmal's influence on emerging Zionist historiography is described in Conforti, "Historiografia ve-zikaron tsoni," 57–63.

22. Rapoport, "El Hakore." Introduction to "Toldot rabbenu natan ba'al he'arukh." *Bikurey ha-itim* 10 (1829): 4, quoted in Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 135.

23. Luzzatto to Rapoport, June 5, 1860, in Eisig Gräber, ed., *Igrot Shadal* (Cracow, 1894), 9:1367, quoted in Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 27.

24. Ibid.

25. Strelisker, "Al davar ha-to'elet mi-sipurey korot shenot dor va-dor," 142–46. See Feiner, "Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historiography," 23.

26. Rapoport, "Sikhron la-aharonim," *ha-karmel* 4:490, quoted in Barzilay, *Shlomo Yehuda Rapoport*, 57.

27. Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 137. Myers expresses a similar view in his *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 25–29. Both scholars make it clear that among Jewish intellectuals of the Enlightenment, the transmission of history was less important than religiously motivated research and the revival of the Hebrew lan-

guage. Wolfgang Hardtwig's observation shows that this kind of function was related to Enlightenment historiography in general: "Like other departments of the Arts faculty, concern with history was merely preparatory to general moral education." Hardtwig, "Die Verwissenschaftlichung," 81.

28. Meyer, "The Emergence of Modern Jewish Historiography," 165n13.

29. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 303–33. On Beer, see Hecht, "An Intellectual Biography of the Maskil Peter Beer." See also Cermanova, "Der jüdische Historismus," 45–53; Brenner, "Between Kabbala and Haskala."

30. Beer, *Geschichte*, 1:8. In Württemberg, the rabbis henceforth even used the title *Kirchenrat* (ecclesiastical councillor) and the Jewish community was called the *Oberkirchenbehörde* (superior ecclesiastical authority).

31. A direct predecessor of Beer in connection with the alleged opposition between a rational Karaite Judaism and a corrupted rabbinical Judaism was Büsching, *Geschichte der jüdischen Religion*, 181–92.

32. *London Quarterly Review*, 38 (1828): 104.

33. Beer, *Geschichte*, 1:5.

34. As Louise Hecht has shown, the first approach to a denominational interpretation of Jewish history and a rejection of its national elements can already be found in Beer's early writings, which deal with the age of the Second Temple. See Hecht, "The Beginning," 355–57.

35. Wolf, "Die Versuche zur Errichtung einer Rabbinerschule in Österreich," 41.

36. Beer, *Dath Israel oder das Judenthum*.

37. Beer, *Geschichte*, 2:4.

38. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:427.

39. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 86. The foundation of the association has often been described. Key studies include Ucko, "Geistesgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Wissenschaft des Judentums"; Wallach, "The Beginnings of the Science of Judaism"; Glatzer, "The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Studies"; Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 205–32; Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, 144–82.

40. Wieseltier, "Etwas über die jüdische Historik," 137–39.

41. Zunz, "Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur," 4. On his biography, see Glatzer, *Leopold Zunz. Jude, Deutscher, Europäer*.

42. Wieseltier, "Etwas über die jüdische Historik," 148.

43. Scholem, "The Science of Judaism—Then and Now," 307. On this subject, see the more detailed discussion in chapter 5 below.

44. Gans, "Zweite Rede vor dem 'Kulturverein,'" 68.

45. *Ibid.*, 67.

46. Immanuel Wolf, "Ueber den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judentums" (1823), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 351.

47. *Ibid.*, 348.

48. Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, 21:114.

49. Zunz, *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*. David Roskies sees this as a radical deviation from Jewish scholars' traditional mode of reading: "By historicizing the greatest of all medieval Ashkenazic commentators [Salomon ben Isaac, called Rashi], Zunz made biography into a weapon against those who claimed Rashi's mantle—the rabbinic establishment of his own day and age." Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*, 4. According to Schorsch, the essay

shows “how far rabbinic Judaism had deviated and degenerated from the cultural creativity it had achieved in the twelfth century.” Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 246.

50. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur*, 21.

51. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, p.v. In the first edition the foreword fell victim to the censor.

52. *Ibid.*, 8.

53. Zunz, *Namen der Juden*, 119–24.

54. On Jost, see Michael’s Hebrew biography, *I. M. Jost*.

55. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 10/1:4f.

56. See Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 305–7.

57. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 8:310f.

58. *Ibid.*, 10/3:39.

59. *Ibid.*, 10/3:71.

60. Jost, “Vor einem halben Jahrhundert,” 145. See also Zirndorf, *Isaak Markus Jost und seine Freunde*.

61. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 1:viii–ix.

62. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 239–41.

63. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 9:11.

64. *Ibid.*, 10:6.

65. *Ibid.*, 2:298f.

66. *Ibid.*, 9:40–103. As Jacob Shavit explained in his wide-ranging account of the reflection of Hellenism in Jewish modernity, “It is not surprising that the first scholarly articles devoted to examining the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism were written within the framework of German Jewish culture. Their impetus was the desire to prove that a Jew could simultaneously live under two different cultural systems; or, taking a more radical approach, that a positive symbiosis between Judaism and the surrounding (German) culture was possible. Judaism was portrayed as a pluralistic, dynamic, and open cultural and religious system. On the other hand, nationally oriented historiography laid much greater emphasis on the way in which Judaism had internalised foreign values and on the polarization and confrontation between Judaism and Hellenism (with Hellenistic antisemitism serving as central theme).” Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem*, 297f. In her investigation of this issue, Maren Niehoff comes to the same conclusion: “While Christian scholars had appropriated Alexandrian Judaism as a means of grounding their own identity in Ancient Hellenism, the subtext of the Jewish discussion related to inverse issues. Accepting the equation Ancient Hellenism = Modern (Christian) culture, Jewish scholars were thus concerned to define Judaism’s relationship to its surroundings. The task was to define the nature, the desirability and degree of acculturation. To what extent could and should Judaism reform itself in the spirit of the time without losing its own identity? Alexandrian Judaism came in this way to be treated as a paradigm for types of modernization in nineteenth century Germany.” Niehoff, “Alexandrian Judaism,” 10f; on Jost, see *ibid.*, 13.

67. Isaak Markus Jost, *Allgemeine Geschichte des Israelitischen Volkes* (1832), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 25.

68. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 33.

69. Willstätter, *Allgemeine Geschichte des Israelitischen Volkes*, and Elkan, *Leitfaden beim Unterricht*, both rely on Jost. See Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 40.

70. Cassel, “Juden (Geschichte),” 233. There were also exceptions, though. Early on, the Prague historian Salomo Löwisohn wrote a short history of the North African Jews, which first appeared in the journal *Sulamith* (4, no. 1 [1812]: 255–70) under the significant title “Über den Zustand der Juden in den Ländern der Barbarei nebst einigen historischen Notizen von ihrem dortigen ersten Etablissement bis auf unsere Tage” (On the Condition of Jews in Barbarous Lands, with a Few Historical Notes on Their Establishment There Down to Our Own Time). Another Prague historian, Marcus Fischer, devoted a good deal of space to this subject in his survey *Historisches Taschenbuch*.

71. Levenson, “The Apostate as Philosemite,” 133f.; Pessen, “Cassel, Paulus Stephanus.”

72. Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 136f, 178–80. A little later on, more radical positions also emerged in eastern Europe. Among these were those expressed in the work of Yoshua Heshel Schorr (1818–95), the editor of the Hebrew periodical *be-haluts* (*Pioneer*). He was one of the few maskilim who supported a reform of Judaism as understood by the liberal movement (*ibid.*, 152–56).

73. For Geiger, Schorsch’s observation was particularly valid: “Born in a battle for a better world, Wissenschaft des Judentums entered Jewish consciousness in alliance with the cause for religious Reform. For at least the first two decades after the demise of the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, its primary practitioners were to be found among the first generation of university-trained school teachers and rabbis who pressed for internal accommodations dictated by the change in external conditions.... Recovery of the past became the means for reconstituting the present.” Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 303.

74. Quoted in Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, 53.

75. To the medieval Jewish tradition belong especially the *Toldot Yeshu*, the legends from the life of Jesus that probably date from eighth-century Italy and that Graetz called “a shoddy effort.” For a critical edition with a German translation, see Callsen, *Das jüdische Leben Jesu*.

76. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, 19.

77. *Ibid.*, 20f.

78. *Ibid.*, 14. Benjamin’s expression “to brush history against the grain” is found in *Illuminationen. Gesammelte Schriften*, 1/2:697 (eleventh thesis on the philosophy of history); *Illuminations*, 257.

79. Geiger, “Einleitung,” 27. Quotation from Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity*, 133.

80. Elbogen, “Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur,” 330.

81. In antiquity, Jews were already of different minds as to whether the dispersal of Jews throughout the world should be seen as a divine punishment or a blessing. Whereas apocryphal and pseudoepigraphic works written in Hebrew as well as the later rabbinical literature adopted the former standpoint, authors writing in exile like Josephus and Philo Judaeus of Alexandria also came to adopt the second standpoint: they regarded the mission of spreading the monotheistic conception among the Gentiles as a blessing that was made possible by the dis-

persal. On this, see the detailed discussion in Gafni, *Land, Center, and Diaspora*, 19–40.

82. Abraham Geiger, “Exil und Rückkehr” (1864), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 167f.

83. Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums*, 1:6.

84. *Ibid.*, 183.

85. Bäck, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 175f. For the most important German Jewish philosopher at the beginning of the twentieth century, Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), the division of biblical Israel into two kingdoms and the earliest beginning of the dispersal were already harbingers of the later course of Jewish history, to which no political character was to be attached. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft*, 294. A more detailed discussion of Cohen’s view of history is found in Myers, *Resisting History*, 35–67. In later generations as well, historians were to interpret the destruction of the Second Temple in accord with their views. For instance, Dubnow saw in the founding of the Academy of Yavne chiefly the displacement of the political and administrative center of Jewish life, and thus the beginning of the movement toward autonomous Jewish centers. See, for example, Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 3:11; see also Dubnow, “An Essay in the Philosophy of History,” 341. Baron believed that Judaism’s only chance of survival was in its transformation after the catastrophe of Masada and the disaster of Bar Kokhba from a sovereign nation to the community founded in Yavne, which following Yohanan ben Zakai, abandoned its own statehood: “In this way Jewry succeeded in speedily overcoming the depressing mental effects of the disaster. With renewed confidence it dedicated itself to the main task of inner consolidation.” Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed., 2:127f. However, this was not the view of Zionist historians, who revered the heroes of Masada, Elazar ben Yair, and Shimon bar-Giora, despite the defeat. See Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*.

86. Moritz Lazarus, “Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studirt man jüdische Geschichte und Litteratur?” (1900), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 112.

87. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, 173–202; Breuer, “Hokhmat Yisrael.” See also Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 49–59.

88. “Prospectus,” *Jeschurun* [old series] 1 (October 1854): 3.

89. “In effect, Hildesheimer and his group said that the academic study of Judaism was permissible as long as it did not negate certain doxologies, that is, the divinity of the Oral Law, and the Mosaic authorship of the Bible.” Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer*, 162.

90. In this connection, special attention is due to the work *Dorot ha-rishonim* (Generations of the Founders) by the Lithuanian scholar Isaac Halevy (1847–1914), who had been living in Hamburg since 1902. This work, which operates on the firm basis of one of the leading representatives of Orthodox Agudat Israel, is situated with respect to other Orthodox scholars in Ellenson, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 9–15.

91. The quotations are taken from Frankel’s essays of the 1950s and are found in Brämer, *Rabbiner Zacharias Frankel*, 270–72.

92. Meyer, “Two Persistent Tensions,” 110.

93. See Geiger, “Zunz im Verkehr mit Behörden,” 253, 258. See also Jospe, “The Study of Judaism”; Simon, “Wissenschaft vom Judentum”; Brenner, “Jüdische Geschichte an deutschen Universitäten.”

94. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 38–46.

95. At the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris a chair for rabbinical Hebrew—the first of its kind at a secular university—was established in 1877, and a whole series of Jewish university professors with other chairs were also working in the area of Judaic studies. Rodrigue, “Totems, Taboos, and Jews,” 3. Aron Rodrigue emphasizes the difference between the academic background of Jewish scholars in monarchical Germany, and that of those working in the secular and anticlerical spirit dominant in the French republic. On the broader context, see Brenner, Caron, and Kaufmann, *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered*; Simon-Nahum, *La cité investie*.

96. “Hence to all intents and purposes, the message of emancipation was that the history of French Jews as a distinctive minority had come to its conclusion with their momentous change in civil status.” Hyman, “French Jewish Historiography,” 329.

97. See especially Salvador, *La République des Hébreux*; Salvador, *Histoire de la domination romaine en Judée*. Cf. Simon-Nahum, “Jüdische Historiographie,” 99.

98. Léon Halévy, *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs anciens*, quoted in Rodrigue, “Léon Halévy,” 415.

99. *Ibid.*, 421.

100. Léon Halévy, *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes*, vii, quoted in Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, 89.

101. *Ibid.*, 25, quoted in Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, 90.

102. Lion Mayer Lambert, *Précis de l'histoire des Hébreux depuis le patriarche Abraham jusqu'en 1840* (Metz, 1840), 416, *Revue des études juives* 48 (1904): 20, quoted in Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, 90f.

103. Maurice Bloch, “La Société juive en France depuis la Révolution,” *Revue des études juives* 48 (1904): 20, quoted in Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, 90f. Cahen, “Les décrets et les israélites,” 363.

104. Théodore Reinach, *Histoire des Israélites depuis la ruine de leur indépendance nationale jusqu'à nos jours*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1914), 315, quoted in Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, 93.

105. Reinach, *Histoire des Israélites*, 2nd ed., 373f.

106. Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*, 96.

107. Over a century later, the historian Nathaniel Katzburg wrote about Löw: “He was the first among Hungarian Jewish historians who, like other contemporary Jewish historians, made use of history to advance political causes.” Katzburg, “Hungarian Jewish Historiography,” 215.

108. In his work published in 1871, *Der Jüdische Kongress in Ungarn*, he discusses the religious schism in Hungary in a much broader way than the title indicated, and in the second edition he therefore gave the work the title *Zur neueren Geschichte der Juden in Ungarn*.

109. Löw, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4:381.

110. *Ibid.*, 4:358. Joseph Bergl's volume on Hungary (written as a supplement to Graetz's *History of the Jews*, which had paid little attention to Hungarian

Judaism) was the result of the attempt of Hungarian Jewish historians to deal with their history in a way analogous to that of the great Jewish centers of Europe. As in the case of Löw, in Bergl the subject of emancipation and integration dominated the narrative. See Bergl, *Geschichte der ungarischen Juden*. This viewpoint was criticized by Meir Zipser, who reproached Löw and Bergl for having selected, in matters relating to religious reform, only those historical facts that fit into their worldview and were useful for their political goals. But Zipser hastened to add that throughout the centuries Hungarian-Jewish relationships had been friendly and harmonious (Katzburg, "Hungarian Jewish Historiography," 216). Orthodox rabbis like Leo Singer, the rabbi of Várpalota, or Yekutiel Yehuda Grünwald from Sziget, wrote their own counterhistories in Hebrew or Yiddish, but remained clearly in the minority and were read only by a small circle.

111. Here I want to express my gratitude for the information on Hungarian Jewish historiography given to me by Dr. Michael Miller (Budapest).

112. Kohn, *Héber kutforrások és adatok Magyarország történetéhez*.

113. "This patriotic bias gives his book a peculiar red-white-green—Hungarian Nationalist—coloring," Raphael Patai wrote about these attempts to harmonize history. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 12f.

114. See the intensely apologetic work of the chief rabbi of Ujpest, Venetianer, *A magyar zsidóság története*. See also Kecskeméti, *A zsidók egyetemes története*.

115. Miron, "Im tom ha-elef"; Haraszti, "A zsidó történetírás nehézsége, avagy egy illúzió fogsában," 282. I would like to thank Agnes Erdos, who drew my attention to this text and translated the quoted passages from the Hungarian.

116. Lieben, "Die Ramschak-Chronik"; Hecht, "The Beginning," 362f.

117. See Nathans, "On Russian-Jewish Historiography"; Raba, *Between Remembrance and Denial*. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Jeffrey Veidlinger, who allowed me to see his unpublished manuscript on historical culture among Jews in the Russian Empire.

118. Soifer, "The Bespectacled Cossack," 43. It may be characteristic of the respective national contexts that Polish Jewish historians treated Lithuania as an outlying Polish province, whereas their Russian colleagues emphasized the independent development of a Lithuanian Judaism.

119. See Wodzinski, *Haskalah and Hasidism*, 220–22. In the nineteenth century, historians like Tadeusz Czacki and Leon Hollaenderski had already taken on the history of the Jews in Poland, but not yet in a scholarly fashion, and above all in order to show, like the early maskilim, that they were good Poles. Hermann Sternberg's attempt at a history of the Jews in Poland sought to make this material more accessible to the German-speaking reader. See Soifer, "The Bespectacled Cossack," 33–36, 72f.

120. Biderman, *Mayer Balaban*, 30.

121. See Wodzinski, *Haskalah and Hasidism*, 220–22.

122. Biderman, *Mayer Balaban*, 24.

123. Kraushar's *Frank i frankisci polscy* relied largely on sources from within the Frankist movement, and used no Hebrew or Jewish sources, but the work of the important Zionist Nahum Sokolow was still translated into Hebrew. See Galas, "Aleksander Kraushar."



124. Quoted in Shatzky, "Alexander Kraushar," 169.

125. The most successful Dutch Jewish history book also emphasized the special achievements of emancipation in Holland, and placed the accomplishments of Dutch Jewish scholars such as M. Lemans or S. I. Mulder alongside those of great figures of the Haskala such as Mendelssohn or Wessely. The author of a textbook published in 1906, *Israel onder de volkeren. Schets der Joodsche geschiedenis van de Grieksche overheersing tot heden* (Israel among the Gentiles: Jewish History from Greek Rule to the Present), was Levie David Staal, the principal of a Jewish elementary school in Zutpen. Over the following three decades, his general survey was to go through four editions. I thank Professor Renate Fuks-Mansfeld for letting me see an unpublished lecture on this subject that she presented at a meeting on Jewish historiography held in Amsterdam in November 2001—since published as "'The First Shall Be the Last': The Rise and Development of Modern Jewish Historiography in the Netherlands until 1940."

126. See especially Endelman's fundamental *The Jews of Georgian England*; Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*.

127. Grace Aguilar, *Records of Israel* (London, 1844), 110, quoted in Hart, "Perioden des Glücks," 80. Among the first studies on British Jewish historiography is Levy, "The Jewish Historical Society of England"; see also Newman, "The Historiography of Anglo-Jewry."

128. Wolf, "A Plea for Anglo-Jewish History," 6. Cf. Hart, "Perioden des Glücks," 77.

129. See Massil, "The Foundation."

130. Quoted in Liberles, "Postemancipation Historiography," 58.

131. Hart, "Perioden des Glücks," 85. Hart points out that nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish historiography, which has been denounced as "whitewashing," was also a corrective for an idealized image of the non-Jewish historian of the English past, a sort of counterhistory. See also Liberles, "Postemancipation Historiography." David Cesarani noted that the Jewish Historical Society "set out to legitimate the presence of the Jews in Britain by demonstrating their utility to the state and their enthusiastic adoption of British culture." Little attention to the history of immigration or immigrants from eastern Europe was planned. See Cesarani, "Social Memory," 17.

132. Quoted in Liberles, "Postemancipation Historiography," 51.

133. Straus to Kayserling, December 2, 1891, and Straus to Kayserling, March 2, 1892, Jewish National University Library, Moritz Kayserling Collection, Jerusalem, quoted in Roemer, "Outside and Inside the Nations."

134. "Die jüdische Geschichtsschreibung," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* (November 28, 1889): 749.

## CHAPTER 2: BETWEEN RELIGION AND NATION

1. Quotations in Gronau, *Max Liebermann*, 118–23; Boskamp, *Studien zum Frühwerk von Max Liebermann*, 75.

2. Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr*.

3. Heinrich von Treitschke, "Unsere Aussichten," in Krieger, *Der "Berliner Antisemitismusstreit"*, 1:11.

4. Schütz, “Weil ich ein eingefleischter Jude bin,” 69f.; Gronau, *Max Liebermann*, 124.

5. See Mommsen’s contribution in Bahr, *Der Antisemitismus*, 27.

6. See the conclusion in Mommsen’s “Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum” from December 1880, where we read, “The word ‘Christianity’ no longer has quite the meaning it once had; but it is still the only word which subsumes the character of present-day international civilization and in which millions and millions of people feel themselves to be standing together on the same planet. To remain outside this framework and to stand within the [German] nation is possible, but difficult and dangerous. Anyone whose conscience, be it positive or negative, forbids him to abjure Judaism and to convert to Christianity will have to act accordingly and accept the consequences.” Quoted in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 2:708f. See also Malitz, “Auch ein Wort über unser Judenthum.”

7. Graetz, *Briefwechsel mit einer englischen Dame*, 75.

8. “Brief von Heinrich Graetz an Jakob Bernays,” December 15, 1880, in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 2:754.

9. Heinrich von Treitschke, “Unsere Aussichten,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 1:12.

10. Heinrich Graetz, “Erwiderung an Herrn von Treitschke,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 1:99.

11. Michael, *Heinrich Graetz*, 35. On the use of his first name, see *ibid.*, 13.

12. Heinrich von Treitschke, “Herr Graetz und sein Judenthum,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 1:125.

13. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 302.

14. *Ibid.*, 292. The *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* had already noted something similar in 1880. See the corresponding contribution: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 2 (January 13, 1880), 20f.

15. Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity*, 64f. On the Graetz-Treitschke debate, see also Pyka, *Jüdische Identität*; Jensen, *Gebildete Doppelgänger*, 232–37.

16. Bloch, *Biographie des Dr. H. Graetz*, 50f.

17. Hermann Cohen, “Ein Bekenntniß in der Judenfrage,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 1:351; Ludwig Bamberger, “Deutschthum und Judenthum,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 1:220.

18. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 95f.

19. Gudemann, *Ludwig Geiger als Kritiker*, 4.

20. Cohn, “Heinrich Graetz,” 188.

21. Graetz, *Gnosticismus und Judenthum*, vi–vii. This is a reworked version of the dissertation that Graetz wrote in 1845, “De auctoritate et vi quam gnosis in Judaismum habuerit.”

22. “Rabbinatswirren,” *Orient* 5 (1844): 21f.

23. Graetz reviewed Geiger’s study in *Literatur-Blatt des Orients* in 1844 and subsequent editions of the journal. See also Michael, *Heinrich Graetz*, 33f.; Pyka, *Jüdische Identität*, 84–86.

24. For further details, see Brenner, “Gnosis and History.”

25. Since Graetz identified the concept *minim* with the Gnostics, the discussion has had widespread repercussions. On recent literature on this subject, see

Gruenwald, "The Problem of the Anti-Gnostic Polemic in Rabbinic Literature"; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 67.

26. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:412. See also Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 58f. Heine's description of "Friedländer & Co." as "foot-corn surgeons" (*Hühneraugenoperateurs*) comes from a letter he wrote to Immanuel Wohlwill on April 1, 1823.

27. Philippson, "Vom Institut zur Förderung israelitischer Literatur"; Graetz, "Gegenerklärung," 284–86. On the discussion regarding this affair, see Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship*, 85. In his *Volkstümliche Geschichte* Graetz wrote about the radical reformer Samuel Holdheim: "Since Paul of Tarsus, Judaism had never had such an internal enemy who shook the whole structure to its foundations." Whereas for him, Frankel was a centrist—and thus represented Graetz's ideal figure: "Thus he was a man of the golden mean, as far from Geiger's and Holdheim's storminess as he was from Raphael Hirsch's veneration of mummies." Graetz, *Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden*, 6:314–16.

28. Quotations in Grayzel, "Graetz's History in America," 225.

29. "Heinrich Graetz," in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 6:67.

30. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:426f.

31. Quotations in *ibid.*, 5:xiv.

32. *Ibid.*, 4:v.

33. *Ibid.*, 3:v. The chapter on Jesus did not appear in the first edition and was first printed in 1862 as an appendix to Moses Hess's *Rom und Jerusalem*. See Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, 136.

34. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 4:6.

35. Graetz, "Jüdisch-geschichtliche Studien," 112f.

36. Jeffrey Blutinger has noted that in volume 4, Rapoport is cited sixteen times, Frankel eleven, and Luzatto eight, while Jost is cited only twice, and the eleven references to Zunz are often critical. Blutinger, "Writing for the Masses," 81.

37. Quotations in Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 4:2.

38. *Ibid.*, 4:3.

39. On the other hand, cf. the second edition of 1866 (Leipzig: O. Leiner), 1: "The long, almost seventeen-hundred-year period of dispersal is at the same time a period of unprecedented suffering, uninterrupted martyrdom, of debasement and humiliation that increased with every century, but it is also a period of mental activity, unremitting intellectual work, and tireless research."

40. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 4:1f.

41. We find the same view in Dubnow's article "Geschichtsschreibung, Jüdische," 1082, Graetz being seen as only part of German Jewish historiography, in whose center stand "the passive heroism of the martyrs and intellectual creation."

42. Leopold Zunz, "Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters" (1855), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 286.

43. Löwisohn, *Vorlesungen über die neuere Geschichte der Juden*, 3.

44. Isaak Markus Jost, "Allgemeine Geschichte des Israelitischen Volkes" (1832), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 26f.

45. In the last volume of his history, Graetz in fact reproaches Jost for having written merely “a history of suffering and scholars.” Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:456.

46. *Ibid.*, 4:1.

47. Pyka, *Jüdische Identität*, 234.

48. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 5:xv–xvii.

49. Frankel, “Einleitendes,” 3. First part quoted in Pyka, *Jüdische Identität*, 206; second part quoted in Brämer, *Rabbiner Zacharias Frankel*, 275–96.

50. It may be more than an accident that the Israeli researchers Ettinger and Shlomo Avineri regard Graetz chiefly as a trailblazer for the Jewish national movement, whereas the chancellor of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary, Schorsch, saw Graetz chiefly as one of the founders of a Conservative Judaism. According to Avineri, Graetz made a significant contribution to the perception of the Jews as a nation. See Avineri, “Graetz”; Ettinger, “Yahadut ve-toldot ha-yehudim”; Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 266–302. See also the discussion in Meyer, “Reuven Michael,” 266–70.

51. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 1:x.

52. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 1:1.

53. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 3/1:274.

54. *Ibid.*, 282n3.

55. Quotations in Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 2:149. In reading the description of the Jewish society of Palestine in the first century, one is reminded of the similar sketch of eighteenth-century European society, where Galilee takes the place of a “dilapidated” (*verwahrloste*) culture of the eastern European Jews, with their “half-animal” Yiddish language, whereas the great Pharasaic minds like Hillel and Shammai remind us of the German Jewish Enlightenment associated with Mendelssohn.

56. Quotations in Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 3/1:288–98.

57. *Ibid.*, 4:74.

58. *Ibid.*, 4:97.

59. *Ibid.*, 3/1:272.

60. Philippson, “Vom Institut zur Förderung der israelitischen Literatur,” 388. See Blutinger, “Writing for the Masses,” 90.

61. See Michael, *Heinrich Graetz*, 32.

62. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 1:xx–xxi.

63. *Ibid.*, 11:vii.

64. Quotations in Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 684–89.

65. *Ibid.*, 189.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 240.

68. “Das goldne Zeitalter spanisch-jüdischer Poesie” already appears in Delitzsch (*Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*, 44), but it is limited to the century between 940 and 1040.

69. Bäck, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 264.

70. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 6:x.

71. Quotations in *ibid.*, 7:vii–ix.

72. Ibid., viii–ix.

73. See, for example, his commentary on Merkava mysticism, which is concerned with the divine throne over the seventh heaven, and which Graetz describes as a “theory elaborated by a dimwit” (ibid., 3/1:216), or his characterization of the medieval Kabbalah as “anal doctrine” (*Afterlehre*) (ibid., 7:59).

74. See Elukin, “A New Essenism”; Schäfer, “Ex oriente lux”; Schäfer, “Adversus cabbalam.” Schäfer concludes that Graetz’s “attacks on the Kabbala must be read as attacks on Christianity as well” (“Ex oriente lux,” 80), and that he thereby “intentionally pursued a program that was very closely connected with his conception of religion and of the Jewish religion”—namely, to battle “Judaism in Christianity” (“Adversus cabbalam,” 189). This is an interesting hypothesis, but it must remain speculative. It seems to me that Graetz’s aversion to mysticism should not be interpreted solely as a kind of Jewish-Christian cultural conflict but should also be seen as part of the battle for emancipation shaped by rationalist paradigms.

75. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 7:385–402, 430–48.

76. Geiger, *Allgemeine Einleitung*, 188f.

77. Quotations in Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:95–104.

78. Geiger, *Allgemeine Einleitung*, 208.

79. Bäck, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 508.

80. Franzos, *Halb-Asien*. See Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*.

81. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 11:2f.; see also chapter 6 below.

82. On Mendelssohn as a symbol of German Judaism, see Sorkin, “The Mendelssohn Myth.”

83. Euchel, *Toldot harav*.

84. Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums*, 3:293–96. In accord with his efforts at reform, Jost turned Mendelssohn into a “Reformer” as well. See, for instance, the title of the chapter following the one on Mendelssohn: “The Other Reformers,” or the fact that Mendelssohn himself is dealt with under the rubric “Anti-Rabbinism,” which Jost explains this way: “We count Mendelssohn, regardless of his absolutely rabbinical attitude, among the opponents of rabbinism.” See Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 8:65, 80. In his *Geschichte der Juden und ihrer Litteratur* (379f.), Brann also speaks of a “third Moses, with whom a new light dawned over Israel.” Previously, Brann suggests, Israel had been at a lower cultural level, “until a Moses came again and led it into the land of Freedom, into the empire of education and enlightenment.”

85. The break with Hirsch, to whom he had dedicated his dissertation, was mutual, and is clearly marked in Graetz’s diary after Hirsch’s vehement criticism of volume 4 of *Geschichte der Juden*: “I am glad that I have fully broken with this *Gottesbrabant*. I don’t want to have anything more do with him and his rabble.” Graetz, *Tagebuch*, April 13, 1856, 217f. Hirsch had published his criticism in three successive annual volumes (1855–57) of his journal *Jeschurun*.

86. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 38.

87. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture*, 35; Grayzel, “Graetz’s History in America.”

88. Blutinger, “Writing for the Masses,” 3.

89. *Di judische folks-geshikhthe, nakh der "Folkstimlekher geschikhthe der Juden" fun professor H. Graetz. Nay iberdruckt, oysgebesert un farfolkomet bis tsu der gegenvertiger tsayt, fun Ben-Zvi*, 4:97, 115, 117. New York, n.d. This edition seems to be identical with the one translated by Joseph Judah Lerner and published by N. G. Sachs in Warsaw in 1898.

90. *Di judische geshikhthe, nay bearbeytet nakh prof. Graetz un andere Quellen durkh B. K-J*, 7:381, 384f. Warsaw, n.d. Brann's bibliography in 1917 of Graetz's writings lists six additional translations into Yiddish. Brann, "Verzeichnis von H. Graetzens Schriften und Abhandlungen," 486f.

91. This Hebrew translation served as the basis for the English edition of Graetz's work, *A Popular History of the Jews*, as the translator, Rabbi A. B. Rhine, noted in his foreword, and probably also for the Yiddish edition mentioned in the preceding note.

92. Blutinger, "Writing for the Masses," 273, 284. Whereas "Dr. Zvi Graetz" is named as the author on the cover of the third edition, in the foreword he is presented as "Rabbi Zvi Graetz." Rabinovitch, "Rosh davar le-hots'a shlishit," 1. The Hebrew *tsvi* is the equivalent of the German *Hirsch* (stag).

93. Blutinger, "Writing for the Masses," 277.

94. Graetz, *Die Konstruktion*, 47.

95. See Avineri, "Graetz"; Ettinger, "Yahadut ve-toldot ha-yehudim," 18.

96. Graetz, *Briefwechsel mit einer englischen Dame*, 77f. The work was brought out two years later by the same publisher under the title *Gedanken einer Jüdin über das Judentum in Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft*.

97. The expansion of the second edition was carried out under the influence of the important work by Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, which further developed in the English-speaking realm the line of thought begun by Güdemann. See Horowitz, "Jewish Life."

98. Güdemann, "Heinrich Graetz," 353. First published in the *Wiener Neue Presse*, October 20, 1891.

99. Here too, we should note the interaction in both the 1908 and the 1920 (posthumous) editions with English-speaking writings, and especially with the important articles by Joseph Jacobs in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

100. Bäck, *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, iii-iv.

101. "Die jüdische Geschichtsschreibung," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, November 28, 1889, 750f.

102. Nietzsche, "History in the Service and Disservice of Life," 115.

103. Paul Rieger and Immanuel Bernfeld's expanded second edition of the two first volumes was published in 1922 and 1930, after Philippson's death, by J. Kauffmann in Frankfurt am Main, and was only slightly altered. On Philippson, little has been published to date. See the brief discussion in Wyrwa, "Die europäischen Dimensionen," 103-5.

104. The preliminary outline of a general history of the Jews divides Jewish history into two phases: before and after Mendelssohn. Brann's predecessor volume, planned but never published, would probably have dealt with Mendelssohn. In any case, Philippson's account begins after Mendelssohn's death. Sousan, "From Apologetics to Self-Assurances," 264.

105. Philippson, *Neueste Geschichte*, 2:1.

106. Ibid., 149.

107. Ibid., 2:ii.

108. *Der Israelit* 51 (1910): 2–5; Soussan, “From Apologetics to Self-Assurances,” 183.

109. Philippson, *Neueste Geschichte*, 1:185.

110. Ibid., 1:186, 188.

111. See, for example, M. Freudenthal’s review, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 54 (1910): 108, in which he criticizes “the son’s efforts to make the father the focus of the development.”

112. Philippson, *Neueste Geschichte*, 2:153f.

113. Ibid., p. 2:161, 166f.

114. Not taken into account here is the long list of theologians and ancient historians, from Heinrich Ewald through Julius Wellhausen to Emil Schürer, who have written on biblical Judaism and Jews during the time of Jesus.

115. The following aspect is dealt with in greater detail in my article “Gott schütze uns vor unseren Freunden.” See also Levenson, “Missionary Protestants”; Wiese, “Ein ‘aufrichtiger Freund des Judentums?’” The model for the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Christentums unter den Juden* founded in 1822 was the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, founded in 1808. During the Weimar period, there were about 115 associations in Germany as a whole devoted to missionary work among Jews, of which the Westdeutsche Verein für Israel founded in Cologne in 1843 and the Evangelisch-Lutherische Centralverein für Mission unter Israel founded in 1871 were the most important. Cf. the entry “Judenmission” in the *Jüdisches Lexikon*, vol. 3, cols. 434–38; Lichtenberger, “Christlich-jüdische Beziehungen.” A highly informative regional study is Aring, *Christliche Judenmission*. On a Christian researcher on Jewish history in Russia, see Soifer, “The Bespectacled Cossack.”

116. Kaufmann, “Franz Delitzsch,” 291.

117. According to A. Blumenthal, quoted in Wagner, *Franz Delitzsch*, 164. The leading representative of Liberal Judaism, Geiger, had harsh words for Delitzsch’s missionary activity and challenged him: “Let us meet on the terrain that is common and sacred to us, free from all dry, feeble, ingratiating missionary work and missionary literature.” Letter from Abraham Geiger to Franz Delitzsch, July 18, 1872, printed in Delitzsch, *Christentum und jüdische Presse*, 39. On the other hand, in his obituary of Delitzsch, Kaufmann sought to downplay his missionary work: “If he was a missionary, let us not forget that he was also a propagator of Judaism, its language and its literature, among Christians.” Kaufmann, “Franz Delitzsch,” 305.

118. Wagner, *Franz Delitzsch*, 151.

119. Delitzsch, *Sind die Juden wirklich das auserwählte Volk?* 57. In the same work, Delitzsch overtly urges Jews to convert to Christianity. Ibid., 60f.

120. Delitzsch, *Ernste Fragen*, 72.

121. Franz Delitzsch, quoted in *Saat auf Hoffnung. Zeitschrift für die Mission der Kirche an Israel* 65 (1928), 69. His zeal for conversion is particularly clear in a lecture given in 1870, “Welche Anforderungen stellt die Gegenwart an die Missions-Arbeit unter den Juden?” at a meeting of associations working in Germany to spread Christianity among Jews. Delitzsch calls not only for a better

acquaintance with Judaism but also for this to be used to “defend the world-historical mission of Christianity as the true culmination of Old Testament religion against the challenges of rabbinical and modern Judaism.” *Ibid.*, 13.

122. Delitzsch, *Christentum und jüdische Presse*, 4.

123. Wagner, *Franz Delitzsch*, 150.

124. “Das Magnificat verdeutscht und ausgelegt” (1521), reproduced in Biernert, *Martin Luther und die Juden*, 67.

125. In 1728 Johann Heinrich Callenberg founded the Institutum Judaicum at the University of Halle, which only existed until 1792. Cf. Aring, *Christen und Juden heute*, 51–154.

126. Cf., for example, Strack, *Das Blut im Glauben und Aberglauben der Menschheit*; Strack, *Sind die Juden Verbrecher von Religions wegen?*; Strack, *Jüdische Geheimgesetze?*

127. Cf., for example, Strack, *Hebräische Grammatik mit Übungsbuch*; Strack, *Jüdischdeutsche Texte*.

128. Kirschner, “Strack, Hermann Leberecht.”

129. *Nathanael* originally appeared as *Zeitschrift der Berliner Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Christentums unter den Juden*. After conflicts with the head of the society, from the second year (1886) on Strack published the paper himself as *Zeitschrift für die Arbeit der evangelischen Kirche an Israel*. Regarding the origin and tasks of the Institutum Judaicum in Berlin, cf. *Nathanael* 4 (1888): 56–62.

130. Cf. Strack’s review of Delitzsch’s book, “Ernste Fragen an die Gebildeten jüdischer Religion.”

131. Quoted in Wiese, “Ein ‘aufrichtiger Freund des Judentums?’” 311.

132. For an example of his sharp criticism, see Strack, “Sie eifern um Gott.”

133. Wohlgemuth, “Hermann L. Strack.”

134. Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum*, 281.

135. Leo, *Vorlesungen*, 1–12. See also Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum*, 52.

136. Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum*, 240. The preceding quotation comes from one of Burckhardt’s university lectures, “Kultur des Mittelalters,” and is quoted in *ibid.*, 239.

137. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, 3:550.

138. Mommsen, “Auch ein Wort über unser Judentum,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 2:702f.

139. “Heinrich von Treitschke an Theodor Mommsen,” in Krieger, *Der “Berliner Antisemitismusstreit,”* 2:752f.

140. Heinrich von Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, part 5, “Bis zur März-Revolution” (reprint, Königstein, 1981), 629ff., quoted in Herzig, “Zur Problematik,” 214.

141. Stobbe came from Königsberg, and later taught in Breslau and Leipzig. It is not without importance in this connection that his wife and possibly also his mother came from formerly Jewish families. See Scholze, *Otto Stobbe*, 54, 58, 140.

142. Stobbe, *Die Juden in Deutschland*, vii.

143. For an earlier example of a non-Jewish author on Jewish history in Germany, see Aretin, *Geschichte der Juden in Baiern*. By far the longest chapter in Stobbe’s book is devoted to the subject of “Jews in Trade and Money Changing”



(“Der Handel und die Geldgeschäfte der Juden”). The tone of the book, which oscillates between accusation and defense, is reflected in the following statement: “It is certain that Jews often abused their monopoly and ruined some debtors by charging high rates of interest; it is understandable that their profiteering excited furious hatred of them among the Christian population; —but do we therefore have a right to reproach the Jews of the Middle Ages for having turned exclusively to money changing? Can we reproach a starving man when he eats too much of the only food that is set before him?” Stobbe, *Die Juden in Deutschland*, 104.

144. Wilhelm Roscher, “Die Stellung der Juden im Mittelalter, betrachtet vom Standpunkte der allgemeinen Handelspolitik” (1875), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 106. See also Oelsner, “Wilhelm Roscher’s Theory”; Oelsner, “The Place of the Jews in Economic History.” On this subject in general, see Reuveni, “Juden und Geld.”

145. Barkai, “Judentum, Juden and Kapitalismus,” 27.

146. Theodor Franke, *Praktisches Lehrbuch der Deutschen Geschichte. Für die Volksschule in anschaulich-ausführlichen Zeit-und Lebensbildern*, part 1, “Urzeit und Mittelalter,” 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Ernst Wunderlich, 1904), 312, quoted in Sasaki, “Die mittelalterlichen Judenverfolgungen,” 336.

147. Quotations in Sombart, *Die Juden*, 319–31.

148. *Ibid.*, x–xi.

149. Ben-Gurion’s Hebrew translation of Sombart’s *Sozialismus und soziale Bewegung* was published in Jerusalem in 1911 by Achdut.

150. Lenger, *Werner Sombart*, 210; see also Bodemann, “Ethnos, Race, and Nation.” On Sombart’s reception among German Jewish historians, see Herzig, “Zur Problematik,” 217.

151. Quoted in Barkai, “Judentum, Juden und Kapitalismus,” 30; Weber, *Das antike Judentum*, vol. 3. Cf. Otto, *Max Webers Studien*.

152. In 1928 and 1929, Buber carried on four conversations about the present situation with the head of the Stuttgart Volkshochschule, Theodor Bäuerle, the historian Hermann Hefele, the writer Wilhelm Michel, and the theologian Jakob Wilhelm Hauer. Cf. *Gemeindezeitung für die Israelitischen Gemeinden Württembergs*, no. 13, October 1, 1928, 157. On the last attempt at a dialogue between Buber and the Protestant scholar Karl Ludwig Schmidt in January 1933, see Mendes-Flohr, “Ambivalent Dialogue.”

153. Cf. Brenner, “An Unknown Project.”

154. Siegele-Wenschkewitz, “The Relationship,” 143. On the relationship between Catholicism and Judaism, cf. Greive, *Theologie und Ideologie*; Schuller, Veltri, and Wolf, *Katholizismus und Judentum*.

155. A certain exception is constituted by the granting of a teaching position in religion and Jewish ethics at the newly founded University of Frankfurt. After the death of the originally intended teacher, Rabbi Nehemias Anton Nobel, his successor Franz Rosenzweig fell ill, and Buber was appointed to this post. Regarding the general status of Jewish studies at German universities, see Jospe, “The Study of Judaism,” 310–13.

156. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2:388, 396.

157. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 5:7f. Later he explained that a fossil was when “a senile body social continues to lead a lingering life—in—death.” *Ibid.*,

9:363. Particularly in the 1950s, a series of Jewish scholars attacked Toynbee's theses on Jewish history, and his negative attitude toward Zionism and the state of Israel. See Kaupp, *Toynbee*, especially 12–18; Rabinowicz, *Arnold Toynbee*.

158. Yerushalmi, "Jüdische Historiographie," 276n8.

159. Elbogen, "Von Graetz bis Dubnow," 7.

### CHAPTER 3: THE NATIONALIZATION OF JEWISH HISTORY

1. Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 1:142; Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 152. There is still no critical biography of Dubnow, although there are many studies dealing with certain aspects of his life and work, of which only a few can be mentioned here: Frankel, "S. M. Dubnov"; Dubnov-Erich, *The Life*; Groberg, "The Life"; Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnows Meistererzählung"; Seltzer, "Simon Dubnow."

2. I thank Verena Dohrn for sending me an unpublished lecture on this subject. See also her introduction in Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, vol. 1, here especially 26f.

3. *Ibid.*, 1:104 (May 1, 1925).

4. The letters appeared from 1897 to 1902 in the periodical *Voskhod* (Sunrise) and were published in Russian as a book in 1907. The first two letters were translated into German by Israel Friedländer and published by Berlin's Jüdischer Verlag in 1905 under the title *Die Grundlagen des Nationaljudentums*. The first three letters also appeared in a translation by Elias Hurwicz in Buber's periodical *Der Jude* in 1926 (special issue on "Judentum und Deutschtum"), 32–57.

5. In the foreword to his *History of Hasidism*, which appeared in German in 1931, he explained his decision to write this work in Hebrew by referring first to the sources and second to ideological considerations: "Because I had long felt a need to write at least one book in our national language, to which I owe the first literary experiences of my childhood." Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, 1:15. Dubnow used as his basis the articles he had already published between 1888 and 1893 in the Russian periodical *Voskhod*.

6. Quoted in Frankel, "S. M. Dubnov," 6.

7. He expressed his political ideas at that time in his essay "Was wollen die Juden?" where his demands for autonomy clearly go beyond those he had held in 1905. See Kel'ner, "Simon Dubnow. Historiker und Politiker," 265–68.

8. Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3:63.

9. On the different interpretations of this, see Dohrn, "State and Minorities," 164.

10. Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3:82, 110 (January 1, 1923).

11. See Dohrn and Hilbrenner, "Einführung. Simon Dubnow in Berlin."

12. Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3:119–20.

13. *Ibid.*, 3:107 (April 27, 1925).

14. *Ibid.*, 3:81 (October 27, 1922).

15. *Ibid.*, 3:106 (March 1, 1925).

16. A brief summary of Dubnow's relationship to Zionism and the relevant scholarly literature is found in Rabinovitch, "The Dawn of a New Diaspora," 280–86.

17. Dubnow, *Die Grundlagen des Nationaljudentums*, 53.

18. The Russian roots of Dubnow's theories of nationalism, especially the influence of Vladimir Soloviev, were long neglected, and are only now being investigated. See Veidlinger, "Simon Dubnow Recontextualized." Dubnow himself briefly summarized his views in "Autonomismus" in the *Jüdisches Lexikon*.

19. However, Dubnow's ideas had great influence on his contemporaries. An example of this is given by the historian Jacob Lestschinsky: "Only those, who like the writer of these lines, had the opportunity of using the 'Letters' as study material in dozens of student-circles and among secondary-school pupils, yeshiva students and workers, and who were thus able to observe the tremendous educational influence, are in a position to appreciate their historical relevance." Lestschinsky, "Dubnow's Autonomism," 80. On Dubnow as a politician, see especially Kel'ner, "Nation der Gegenwart."

20. Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus*, 1:19.

21. Dubnow, *Die Grundlagen des Nationaljudentums*, 34.

22. *Ibid.*, 35.

23. The Israeli philosopher of history Nathan Rotenstreich expressed this carefully: "It is clear that the different aspects of Dubnow's thinking, that is, the strictly historical perspective qua historiographic theory, on the one hand, and the national perspective qua ideology on the other, are interwoven. Here we are obviously not suggesting that his historical theories are simply an expression of his ideology. Nor can one claim without qualification that Dubnow's ideology merely transfers his historiography into practical terms. However, there is at the same time a certain connection between these two aspects of his thought." Rotenstreich, "History, Sociology, and Ideology," 56. Viktor E. Kel'ner not long ago expressed this similarly: "The development of Dubnow's political views proceeded, we can say, in tandem with the development of his scholarly conceptions. At the same time, his historical conception with regard to the Jews of Russia found its continuation in the political theory." Kel'ner, "Nation der Gegenwart," 524. And the British historian John Klier came to absolutely the same conclusion regarding Russian Jewish historians: "[they] were for the most part men of action as well as scholarship, and their research was a weapon in their struggle for human and political rights for Russian Jewry." Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews*, xiii. Klier is one of the most resolute proponents of the view that the Jewish question in the czar's empire must be situated in the general czarist autocracy and its policies with regard to minorities. Recent research is critical especially of Dubnow's isolated view and Jewish national historiography on the Jewish question. See also Hildermeier, "Die jüdische Frage im Zarenreich."

24. Dubnow, *Die jüdische Geschichte*, 17.

25. Quoted in *Evreiskaia starina* 1 (1909): 154. I am grateful to Jeffrey Veidlinger for drawing my attention to this text, which is reproduced in English translation in his book *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

26. A quarter of a century later, he was asked about the plan to republish all eleven volumes of Graetz's history, as he noted in his diary for February 9, 1924: "Declined yesterday the offer made by a group of Berlin scholars [Elbogen and others] to bring out together a 'new Graetz,' to fully rework his multivolume

history. Justified my refusal on the ground that I am in principle against ruining this classic, if also outdated, work by revising it, and that there would be no advantage for me to work at the same time on my own book and someone else's." Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3:94f. (February 9, 1924).

27. Quoted in Frankel, "S. M. Dubnow," 12.

28. Translated into German by Israel Friedländer under the title *Die jüdische Geschichte. Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch*, published by Calvary in Berlin in 1898.

29. Dubnow, *Die jüdische Geschichte*, 11–14.

30. See, for example, Brann, *Geschichte der Juden und ihrer Litteratur*, 2:433. See also chapter 2 above.

31. Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, 1:26f.

32. Graetz, *Die Konstruktion*, 12.

33. Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, 8:498.

34. *Ibid.*, 8:501.

35. Simon M. Dubnow, "Assimilation und nationale Bewahrung" (1930), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 228.

36. Dubnow, *Die Neueste Geschichte*, 3:373; Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 10:34.

37. Simon M. Dubnow, "Diaspora," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1931), 5:126–30.

38. See Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow's Master Narrative"; Veidlinger, "The Historical and Ethnographic Construction of Russian Jewry."

39. Nathans, "On Russian-Jewish Historiography," 411. As Anke Hilbrenner explains, "Correspondingly, Dubnow's historiographical opus magnum can be analyzed as a master narrative, that is, a coherent historical narrative with an explicit perspective at the service of a national cause. The master narrative, typically, is not only influential in the historiographical discourse of the academic world but also gains influence in the public sphere." Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow's Master Narrative," 148.

40. Letter from Simon Dubnow to F. Haymann, September 3, 1937, quoted in Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow's Meistererzählung," 296.

41. Quoted in *ibid.*, 291.

42. At the same time, this was an attempt to rehabilitate the *kahal* after the latter was libeled and the czar dissolved it as an organizational form. The libel was propagated especially by the work of the converted Jew Jacob Brafman, *Materialy dlja izucenija evrejskago byta*.

43. Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, 1:26.

44. *Ibid.*, 3:278.

45. Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow's Meistererzählung," 251.

46. Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, 3:163.

47. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 5:188.

48. Quoted in Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow's Meistererzählung," 295; Fishman, *Dem Feuer entrissen*, 5–7.

49. Dubnow, *Pinkas ha-medina*, xi. A first version had already been published between 1918 and 1925 in the form of supplements to *Evrejskaja Starina* (Jewish Antiquities).

50. Bartal, "Dubnow's Image," 18.

51. Dubnow, *History of the Jews*, 1:26.
52. *Ibid.*, 1:v.
53. Dubnow, "Geschichtsschreibung, Jüdische," col. 1081.
54. Stern, "S. M. Dubnow's 'Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes.'"
55. Strauss, "Soziologische Geschichtsschreibung?" 336.
56. Dubnow, *Die neueste Geschichte*, 3:vi.
57. Stern, "Neueste Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes," 226f.
58. Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, 3:78.
59. *Ibid.*, 3:166 (May 6, 1933).
60. *Ibid.*, 3:171f.
61. According to one report, the murderer was an SS man, while others thought he was a Latvian collaborator; a few reports maintain that Dubnow was shot down on the street before the deportation of Riga's Jews, while others say he was killed in the forest of Rumbula. See Hilbrenner and Berg, "Der Tod Simon Dubnows in Riga 1941."
62. Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 147.
63. Simon Dubnow, *Ob izuncenii istorii russkikh evreev* [On the Study of the Russian Jews] (Saint Petersburg, 1891), 1, quoted in Kel'ner, "Nation der Gegenwart," 523.
64. Quoted in Dobroszycki, "YIVO in Interwar Poland," 497.
65. On Schorr, see Goldberg, "Moses Schorr," 83–95.
66. Aleksiu, "Polish Jewish Historians," 44.
67. The history of the Jews in Kraków appeared in two volumes in 1931 and 1936.
- See Eisenbach, "Jewish Historiography in Interwar Poland"; Biderman, *Mayer Balaban*. See also Goldberg, "Majer Balaban," 3–17.
68. See Dold, "Eine Frage der nationalen und staatsbürgerlichen Ehre," 183.
69. Aleksiu, "Polish Jewish Historians," 46–50.
70. Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow war eine Art intellektueller Pate."
71. Dold, "Eine Frage der nationalen und staatsbürgerlichen Ehre," 188f.
72. Majer Balaban, "Zadania i potrzeby historjografii zydowskiej" [The Tasks and Desiderata of Historiography on the History of the Jews in Poland], in *Pamiętnik V Zjazdu Historyków Polskich* (Lviv, 1931), 225–28. I thank Professor Stefan Schreiner for references to the relevant literature, and for translating and commenting on this article by Balaban.
73. Dobroszycki, "YIVO in Interwar Poland," 499.
74. Opened in February 1928, the institute was devoted above all to research on the Bible and the Talmud as well as on Jewish philosophy, sociology, Semitic languages, and Hebrew literature. The rector of the University of Warsaw took part in the opening ceremony.
75. Biderman, *Mayer Balaban*, 76; Mahler, "Hug ha-historionim."
76. Petersen, "Mir zen far zikh di geshikhte nit fun a historisher mumie," 170. The original reads: "Mir zen far zikh di geshikhte nit fun a historisher mumye, ayngelzamt fun der teologisher skholastik, nit fun a religiezn folkshtam mit a metafizisher misye, nayert fun a lebediker natsye, fun a velt-folk mit an eygener velt-geshikhte, vos hot ... gekemft far zayn kiyem."

77. Quotations in the first comprehensive account of the early history of the YIVO: Kuznitz, "The Origins of Yiddish Scholarship," 191f.

78. Nokhem Shtif, "Memorandum für ein jiddisches akademisches Institut," February 12, 1925, quoted in Dold, "Eine Frage der nationalen und staatsbürgerlichen Ehre," 203.

79. Quoted in Dold, "Eine Frage der nationalen und staatsbürgerlichen Ehre," 196.

80. A survey of research on Polish Jewish history with an epilogue on the fate of Polish Jewish historians during the Shoah is found in Friedman, "Polish Jewish Historiography."

81. *Moriah* 3, nos. 9–10 (1917): 434 f., quoted in Litman, *The Economic Role*, 232.

82. Quoted in Litman, *The Economic Role*, 233.

83. Quoted in Biderman, *Mayer Balaban*, 236f.; Dobroszycki, "YIVO in Interwar Poland," 508. Still, Polish Jewish historians were able to meet this challenge only hesitantly. Even the historical section of the YIVO got involved only in its last volume of the *Historishn Shriftn*, which focused on the Jewish labor movement, with almost half the contributions being by Tcherikower himself.

84. E. R. [Emanuel Ringelblum], "Dray yor seminar far yidisher geshikhte," *Yunger historiker* 1 (1926): 10.

85. In 1926 Jakub Berman wrote a dissertation on the tasks of the historical section of the YIVO, in 1928 he joined the Communist Party, and after the war he became an important party official, serving as the substitute prime minister of Poland from 1952 until he was removed from office in 1956. After the war, his brother Adolf became chair of the central committee of Polish Jews, and emigrated to Israel in 1950, where he was first a representative for the socialist Mapam Party in the Knesset and was later active in the Communist Party. See Shore, "Children of the Revolution."

86. Petersen, "Mir zen far zikh di geshikhte nit fun a historisher mumie," 175. When the Jewish Historical Commission for the Whole of Poland was founded in 1934, the paper was made its official organ and was henceforth called *Bleter far geshikhte*. Ibid., 176.

87. E. R. [Emanuel Ringelblum], "Dray yor seminar far yidisher geshikhte," *Yunger historiker* 1 (1926): 8.

88. Mahler, "Vegn teories fun der yidisher kulturgeshikhte," 40. In contrast to Dubnow's reliance on Ranke's injunction to write history as it really was, Mahler expressed skepticism regarding the possibility of attaining true objectivity in historiography. He respected historiography as a valuable weapon in the battle for a classless society. During the meeting of the YIVO's Central Board in November 1932, he put the point succinctly: "YIVO will soon have to decide whether it stands for bourgeois culture or for proletarian culture." Quoted in Kuznitz, "The Origins of Yiddish Scholarship," 182f.

89. Raphael Mahler, *Divrey yemey yisrael: dorot aharonim* (Merhaviah, Israel, 1961), 1:16.

90. Whereas part of this archive buried underground survived the war, Ringelblum and his family did not survive. See Kassow, "Politics and History."

91. Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship in Soviet Russia*, 23–32. On the question of Soviet policy regarding nationalities, cf. Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment.”

92. L. Holomshtok, “Der yidisher lebnshetger in 18ten yorhundert,” *Tsaytschrift* 4 (1930): 91.

93. Quoted in Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship in Soviet Russia*, 48.

94. Lieberberg, “Di yidishe visnshaft afn tsveytn alfarbandishn kultur-tsusamenfur,” 104f. The different judgments of scholarship on Judaism are summarized in Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship in Soviet Russia*, 34.

95. Lieberberg, “Di yidishe visnshaft afn tsveytn alfarbandishn kultur-tsusamenfur,” 103.

96. *Ibid.*, 109.

97. *Ibid.*, 111.

98. *Ibid.*, 116.

99. *Tsaytschrift* 1 (1926): 1–24; *Tsaytschrift* 4 (1930): 1–29.

100. Sosis, *geshikhte*, 33, 40, 50, and 54.

101. Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship in Soviet Russia*, 47–51.

102. One of its publications was a survey of Jewish history in antiquity in which the author, the classicist Abram B. Ranovich, reduced the monotheistic content of ancient Judaism as much as possible and represented the Hebrews as one among many polytheistic tribes in ancient times. Another contribution concerned with ancient Judaism was Yuditskii’s article on the political and social tendencies in Judea, in which various groups such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Zealots were identified in terms of class conflict as aristocrats and proletarians. See Greenbaum, *Jewish Scholarship in Soviet Russia*, 91f.

103. On the context of Jewish life in the Soviet Union between the two world wars, see Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, chapters 3 and 4.

#### CHAPTER 4: JEWISH HISTORY WITHOUT TEARS?

1. Roth, “The Most Persecuted People?” 136. The original quotation is found in Leopold Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* (1855), quoted in Brenner et al., *Jüdische Geschichte lesen*, 9.

2. Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, 373. This connection between Abrahams, Baron, and Roth is also pointed out in Horowitz, “Jewish Life,” 155.

3. Rosenzweig, “Bildung und kein Ende,” 497.

4. Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” 515.

5. *Ibid.*, 516.

6. *Ibid.*, 516f.

7. *Ibid.*, 517.

8. Yerushalmi, “*Diener von Königen*.” See also Baron’s remark in *A Social and Religious History*, 1st ed., 2:24: “In short, while the villeins ... were serfs of their masters in civil law, the Jews were the serfs of the kings in public law.”

9. Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” 519f.

10. *Ibid.*, 523f.

11. *Ibid.*, 526.

12. Two examples from the first edition of his *Social and Religious History of the Jews* illustrate this. The generally positive image of Jewish life in the Middle Ages is here described in greater detail and summarized in this remark: “The position of the Jews was, nevertheless, by no means unfavorable” (23). In addition, the criticism of the “lachrymose conception of Jewish history” is pursued in connection with its origin among Jewish chroniclers of the early modern period (31f.).

13. The historian David Engel pointed out that in 1913, the seventeen-year-old Baron used, in his first articles in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-mitspeh*, one of the main arguments for his later rejection of the lachrymose version of Jewish history: that in the Middle Ages, the Jews were better off than the peasants. Baron was then writing from a Zionist standpoint about the anti-Jewish boycott in Congress Poland. Engel situates Baron in the context of Eastern European historiographical traditions and also examines the problem of how to translate Baron’s concept of lachrymose. See Engel, “Tsa’ir mi-galitsia,” 34n25. See also Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 376–88.

14. Baron, “Graetzens Geschichtsschreibung,” 5, 13.

15. Raphael, “The Texture,” 64.

16. Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 121, 170.

17. In a brief but wide-ranging interpretative attempt, Baron’s student and successor, Yosef Yerushalmi, showed that he was following in his teacher’s footsteps. For him, Jewish history has for millennia been characterized by the interaction of two factors: exile and domicile. Jews were able to feel at home even in exile—that is, outside the Land of Israel—as is demonstrated by numerous statements made in the most diverse historical periods. Even in medieval history, which was of special interest to Yerushalmi in this context, “on the whole Jews not only adapted to the conditions of exile but flourished within it materially and spiritually.” Yerushalmi, “Exile and Expulsion,” 11..

18. Baron, *A Social and Religious History*, 1st ed., 1:162.

19. Barzilay, “Yishak (Fritz) Baer and Shalom (Salo Wittmayer) Baron,” 57.

20. On Baer and Zionist historiography, see chapter 5 below.

21. In his programmatic *Judenstaat* (1896), Herzl had already expressed the opinion that Jews would never be amicably integrated into a non-Jewish environment, and this axiom was also to dominate the first years of Zionist historiography: “We have tried everywhere honestly to assimilate into the communities around us, while preserving the faith of our fathers. We are not allowed to. We are faithful and often even overenthusiastic patriots—in vain. We make the same sacrifices in life and limb as our countrymen—in vain. We do our utmost to further the reputation of our home countries in the fields of arts and science—in vain.... If they only left us in peace.... But I believe they will not leave us in peace.” Herzl, *The Jews’ State*, 129–30.

22. Yitshak Baer, “Ha-historia ha-hevratit ve-ha-datit shel ha-yehudim,” *Zion* 3 (1938): 291.

23. *Ibid.*, 292.

24. Barzilay, “Yishak (Fritz) Baer and Shalom (Salo Wittmayer) Baron,” 63.

25. Baron, “Autobiography,” folder 5, “Communal and Library Activities,” 8f.

26. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed., 1:17.



27. Baron, *The Jewish Community*. In his interpretation, Baron reproaches Dubnow for having overemphasized the social side of the Jewish community at the expense of its religious side.

28. Simon Dubnow, "A bukh vegn problemn fun der yidisher geshikhte," *Tsukunft* (December 1937): 767.

29. Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 274–82.

30. Quoted in *ibid.*, 274f.

31. *Ibid.*, 308f.

32. *Ibid.*, 9f.

33. Twenty-five years after his original article, having in the meantime gained the status of dean of Jewish historiography, Baron emphasized his earlier positions in the introduction to his multivolume *Social and Religious History of the Jews*: "And were they the only people of the earth to suffer? Has not the lot of all men, especially in those dark and cruel ages of scarcity and horror, been to suffer indescribably agonies for, or what is much worse, without a just case? ... It is quite likely, moreover, that even the average medieval Jew, compared with his average Christian contemporary, man by man, woman by woman, child by child, was the less unhappy and destitute creature." Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd ed., 1:24.

34. Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, 178f.

35. Alderman, "The Young Cecil Roth," 2.

36. Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 202.

37. Baron, "Autobiography," folder 3, autobiography 3: "United States (1926–1934) A: The Institute of Religion," 6, 39f.

38. Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 226.

39. *Ibid.*, 220, 226. Baron's unpublished autobiography informs us about an interesting episode in their relationship. Baron says that he recommended Roth as editor in chief of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, while Roth himself remembered this recommendation as having been made by Benzion Netanyahu. However that may be, Baron did recommend Roth as his replacement during his research semester in 1951—an appointment that Roth willingly accepted. Roth, *Cecil Roth*, 184.

40. Roth, "The Most Persecuted People?" 147.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs,'" 228.

43. Roth, *A History*, 270. See recent research opposing this "rosy" conception of British Jewish history: for example, Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*; Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*; Cesarani, *The Making of Anglo-Jewry*.

44. Roth, *The Jews*, xi.

45. Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia, 1946), 156, quoted in: Ruderman, "Cecil Roth, Historian of Italian Jewry," 131.

46. See introduction of this book.

47. Agnon, "Ad Hena," 7:93.

48. On the situation of scholarship on Judaism in the Weimar Republic, see Brenner, *Jüdische Kultur*, 114–41; Hoffmann, "Wissenschaft des Judentums"; Wassermann, *False Start*.

49. See the dissertation by Dalby, "Central Voices," especially 26–106; see also Hahn, *Die Jüdin Pallas Athene*, especially 173–82. On Pappenheim as an

activist in the Jewish women's movement, see Kaplan, *Die jüdische Frauenbewegung*. On the general background, see Freidenreich, *Female, Jewish, and Educated*; Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*; Prestel, "The 'New Jewish Woman.'"

50. On these texts, see Weissler, "The Religion"; Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*.

51. Her mother, Recha Goldschmidt-Pappenheim, descended from a sister of Glikl's husband. Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 215–16.

52. Pappenheim, *Die Memoiren*. Glikl's text remained unnoticed for more than two hundred years until it was published in the Yiddish original by David Kaufmann in 1894. Because of his resistance, Pappenheim's text was published privately in a limited edition by her brother's publishing house in Vienna, and first became generally available in a 1994 reprint edition. The translation by Alfred Feilchenfeld published in 1913 was a great success for the Jüdischer Verlag, selling some twenty thousand copies. See Brentzel, *Anna O.*, 151f.

53. For details, see Richarz, *Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl*.

54. As Daniel Boyarin rightly points out, this painting was reproduced as a portrait of Glikl herself on the jacket of the reprint edition of Pappenheim's memoirs published in 1979. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 351n147. On Boyarin's identification with Pappenheim, see chapter 6 below.

55. Pappenheim, *Allerlei Geschichten*.

56. Pappenheim, *Zennah u-reenah*, iv–v. See also Brentzel, *Anna O.*, 189f.

57. Steer, *Bertha Badt-Strauss*, 63.

58. See Hahn, "Bertha Badt-Strauss."

59. These include Varnhagen for the *Jüdisches Lexikon* (1930) as well as Henriette Herz, Rebekah Kohut, and Nahida Ruth Lazarus—and also Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Heine—for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1931–34).

60. See Badt-Strauss, "Aus der Geschichte"; Badt-Strauss, "Jüdische Frauenliteratur," *Blätter des Jüdischen Frauenbundes* 12, no.7–8, 31–33. The discussion about this is reproduced in Steer, *Bertha Badt-Strauss*, 160f.

61. *Die Frau* 21 (1914): 609–18, 675–83.

62. Sassenberg, *Selma Stern*, 165.

63. Diary entry, June 7, 1914, *Tagebücher*, vol. 5, Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York, quoted in Gisbert, "Selma Stern," 9. See also Schmidt, "Selma Stern," 207.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Her historical approach was to crystallize in her subsequent publications on the Romantic poet and pietist zealot Juliane von Krüdener as well as Madame de Stael's depiction of Germany. See "Juliane von Krüdener. Eine Erinnerung an die Tage der Heiligen Allianz 1815," *Deutsche Rundschau* 42 (1915): 233–60; "Frau von Staels Deutschland."

66. Sassenberg, *Selma Stern*, 88–98.

67. The first woman regularly "habilitated" (qualified as a university lecturer) and appointed to the post of *Privatdozent* in Germany was Adele Hartmann, who joined the faculty of the University of Munich in February 1919. See Häntzschel, "Zur Geschichte," 95. See also Häntzschel, "Frauen jüdischer Herkunft," 105–26; Puhle, "Warum gibt es so wenige Historikerinnen?" 373–75.

68. Selma Stern, "Die jüdische Frau im Wandel," *Ost und West* 3–/4 (March–April 1922), col. 64–72, quoted in Sassenberg, *Apropos Selma Stern*, 75. See also *ibid.*, 22f.

69. Stern, "Die Entwicklung I," 327f.

70. Stern, "Die Entwicklung II." Jewish women who hosted salons also play an important role in Susman, *Frauen der Romantik*. See Steer, "Der Kampf"; Brandstätter, "Die Poetik des Verlustes."

71. Sassenberg, *Selma Stern*, 174.

72. Stern, "Die Entwicklung IV," 79.

73. Stern, *Der Preussische Staat*, I/1:3f.

74. The literature on Arendt has become almost unmanageable. In our context, see especially Weissberg, "Introduction"; Aschheim, *Scholem, Arendt, Klempner*; Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*.

75. Arendt-Stern, "Aufklärung und Judenfrage." Later on, Arendt was to strongly deny the connection between Jewish culture and the entry into modern society in the nineteenth century: "Jews who wanted 'culture' left Judaism at once, and completely, even though most of them remained conscious of their Jewish origin. Secularization and even secular learning became identified exclusively with secular culture," Arendt writes, "so that it never occurred to these Jews that they could have started a process of secularization with regard to their own heritage." Arendt, "Creating a Cultural Atmosphere," 92.

76. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 81. Weissberg mentions that "Arendt wanted to slip into Rahel's skin" (*ibid.*, 5), and continues: "Arendt blurs the distinction between biographical and autobiographical writing" (*ibid.*, 8).

77. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte*, 208. See also Hoffmann, "Jüdische Geschichtswissenschaft," 145f.

78. "Originale Assimilation," *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 131, March 7, 1933, reprinted in *Jüdische Rundschau* 28–29 (July 4, 1933): 143.

79. See Wassermann, *False Start*. Henry Wassermann tries to show that the few positions in the area of Judaic studies were occupied chiefly by scholars who were either mediocre researchers or had little sympathy with contemporary Judaism—and who sometimes had both characteristics. An outstanding exception was Paul Kahle, a philologist who worked first in Gießen and then in Bonn. On the development in Frankfurt, see Brenner, *Jüdische Kultur*, 256n8.

80. On Reichmann, see Dalby, "Central Voices." On Wischnitzer, see Feil, "Art under Siege." On Jonas, see Klapheck, *Fräulein Rabbiner Jonas*.

81. See Mahler, "Hug ha-historionim"; Dawidowicz, *From That Time and Place*, 77–100.

82. Elbogen, Freimann, and Tykocinski, *Germania Judaica*, xiv–xv.

83. Quoted in Kaznelson, *Juden*, xvi.

84. Meyer, "Without Wissenschaft."

85. Elbogen, *Geschichte der Juden*, 314.

86. Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life*.

87. By a ministerial decree of April 15, 1937, Jews were forbidden to be doctoral candidates. On the last award of a doctorate (to Lotte Schlesinger) in Cologne at the end of the winter semester 1936–37, see Golczewski, *Kölner Univer-*

*sitätslehrer*, 347–49. Kisch, *Schriften*, lists two more 1938 dissertations written at the University of Bonn by Jewish authors.

88. After the 1918 revolution and the end of the old order, the question of whether Jews should be granted national minority status in the German Empire was already being discussed at the highest levels. In the last years of the Weimar Republic, the question of the rights of national minorities and Jewish autonomy was raised again, and after 1933 reformulated under completely different auspices. In the intellectual journal *Der Morgen*, for instance, there was a lively debate on this subject. See, for example, the following contributions to *Der Morgen*: Fritz Friedländer, “Grenzen der Kulturautonomie,” vol. 10, no. 11 (February 1935): 492–97; Fritz Friedländer, “Der Jude im Wandel der Reichsseite,” vol. 11, no. 5 (1935): 197–202; Rudolf Levy, “Der Stand des Minderheitenrechts,” vol. 11, no. 5 (August 1935): 203–7. On this subject before 1933, see Brenner, “Zurück ins Ghetto?”

89. Weichselbaum, “Der Rechtsschutz der Juden.”

90. Schochow, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 147f.

91. Täubler-Stern, “Der literarische Kampf,” 661.

92. *Ibid.*, 666.

93. On Katz’s later career, see chapter 5 below.

94. Katz, *With My Own Eyes*, 93.

95. Katz, “Die Entstehung der Judenassimilation,” 3.

96. *Ibid.*, 79.

97. Schine, *Jewish Thought Adrift*, 109–20.

98. See, for example, Pinkuss, “Saul Ascher,” 32.

99. Hoffmann, “Wissenschaft des Judentums,” 34–38.

100. Straus, “Antisemitismus,” 24.

101. Grau, “Antisemitismus,” 198.

102. The first study on this subject appeared shortly after the end of the war: Weinreich, *Hitler’s Professors*. Among the more recent works, see: Heiber, *Walter Frank*; Schochow, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 131–95; Rupnow, “Arisierung”; Papen, “‘Scholarly’ Antisemitism.” Heschel has demonstrated the participation of German theologians in pseudoscientific Nazi propaganda in her book *The Aryan Jesus*. The most recent and comprehensive work on this subject is Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*.

103. Papen-Bodek, “The Hungarian Institute for Research,” 234.

104. On his biography, see Schulze, “Karl Alexander von Müller.” See also the dissertation by Kinner, “Karl Alexander von Müller,” which is apologetic in this respect.

105. Papen-Bodek, “Anti-Jewish Research,” 170.

106. Müller’s address is reprinted in Frank, *Deutsche Wissenschaft*, 5–11.

107. *Ibid.*, 14, 41.

108. Steinweis, *Studying the Jew*, 231.

109. See Schnee, *Die Hoffinanz*; Kellenbenz, *Sephardim*. Schnee first published his findings in 1944, in the political smear-sheet *Weltkampf: Die Judenfrage in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. In 1939 Kellenbenz was given a research contract at the Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschland (Reich Institute for

the History of Modern Germany). At the end of the war, he personally burned, over several days, the papers of the Munich research institute. See Heiber, *Walter Frank*, 1187.

110. Scholem to Schoeps, November 6, 1949, in Scholem, *Briefe*, vol. 2: 1948–1970, 14.

111. Scholem to Conze, August 6, 1963, in *ibid.*, 105. The objection concerned Karl Georg Kuhn, the head of the Qumran research center. It is unclear whether Scholem knew at that time that Conze had also compromised himself during the Nazi period.

112. Baron, “Autobiography,” folder 3, “Autobiography III United States (1926–1934) A: The Institute of Religion,” 3.

113. *Ibid.*, 44f.

114. Roth, *The Jewish Contribution*, vii.

115. Kaufmann, “Die Wissenschaft des Judentums,” 3.

116. Finkelstein, *The Jews*, xxi.

117. *Ibid.* (“Prefatory Letter”), xiv.

118. *Ibid.*, 1391–97.

119. *Ibid.* (“Foreword”), xxix–xxx.

120. *Ibid.*, viii.

121. *Ibid.* (“Foreword to the Third Edition”), xxxvi.

122. I thank David Biale for letting me see his unpublished lecture on Finkelstein, Kaplan, and the Jewish American contribution to civilization, from which the quotation mentioned is taken.

123. Berlin, “Benjamin Disraeli,” 1; Roth, “Why Anglo-Jewish History?” 29.

## CHAPTER 5: THE RETURN OF THE NATION TO ITS LAND

1. Stanislawski, “Vom Jugendstil zum ‘Judenstil.’”

2. Conforti, “Historiografia ve-zikaron tsioni,” 103.

3. Zionist historians’ proximity to and distance from Wissenschaft des Judentums has been assessed by the historian Todd Endelman: “While they rejected the assimilationist biases of Wissenschaft des Judentums and celebrated rather than erased Jewish particularism, they did not repudiate the traditional view that Jewish history was different, that it was the outcome of autonomous forces.... Where they differed was in their conviction that these forces were national and social rather than spiritual and religious.” Endelman, “Introduction,” 11.

4. Peretz Smolenskin, “Even Israel,” *ha-shabar* 1 (1869), no. 3, 5–8, no. 4, 3–8, no. 6, 2–7, no. 11, 3–91. See Conforti, “Historiografia ve-zikaron tsioni,” 72f.; Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 30.

5. Yavetz, *Sefer toldot yisrael*, vols. 13, 14.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, “Hakdamah” (Foreword). The editor of the fourteenth volume, published posthumously in Tel Aviv in 1940, B. M. Levin, confirmed that this work “was truly written in the spirit of the sons of Israel.” Yavetz, *Sefer toldot yisrael*, 14:iv.

7. On Yavetz, see Michael, *Ha-ketiva ha-historit ha-yehudit*, 425–65, especially 430f.

8. Yavetz, *Sefer toldot yisrael*, 14:119.

9. Halevi's remark in a letter to Rabbi Shlomo Hellmann Kottek in 1908 is found in Michael, *Ha-ketiva ha-historit ha-yehudit*, 465.

10. [Joseph Klausner], "Megamateynu," *ha-shiloah* 11 (January–July 1903): 9. On Klausner's contribution, see Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 35.

11. In his memoirs, in which Klausner discusses his study in Germany in detail, he also describes his scholarly and political career (in Israel, he became the nationalists' presidential candidate in the state's first elections), especially his difficulties in being accepted as a professor of ancient Jewish history. See Klausner, *Darki likrat ha-tehiya*, especially 246.

12. Buber, "Die jüdische Wissenschaft."

13. See Daxelmüller, "Jüdische Volkskunde"; Daxelmüller, "Max Grunwald."

14. For details, see Efron, *Defenders of the Race*.

15. Ruppin, *The Jews of To-day*, 3.

16. Ruppin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart*, iii.

17. Ruppin, *The Jews of To-day*, 301. On Ruppin, see Efron, *Defenders of the Race*, 166–74; Hart, *Social Science*, 56–73; Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy*, 80–102.

18. Theilhaber, *Der Untergang*, 157f. This kind of prophecy of decline was popular. Cf., from a communist perspective, Heller, *Der Untergang*.

19. Hart, *Social Science*, 16.

20. *Leben im russischen Shtetl. Jüdische Sammlungen des Staatlichen Ethnographischen Museums in Sankt Petersburg. Auf den Spuren von An-Ski* (Zwolle, 1993). The society had its roots in a group that took shape at the turn of the century around the lawyer Maksim Vinaver, which took seriously Dubnow's call for the founding of a Russian Jewish historical society and studied "ordinary Jewish people." Later, Vinaver recalled that "in all these ways in which everyday life was expressed there was so much of ourselves that we discovered a blood relationship with them even before we were consciously able to call it 'nationality.'" Quoted in Hilbrenner, "Simon Dubnow war eine Art intellektueller Pate," 153.

21. See Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*.

22. Rubaschoff, "Erstlinge," 32.

23. Bialik, "Mikhtav el ha-orhim."

24. Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 59.

25. Scholem, *Judaica* 6:93.

26. Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 57.

27. Thon, "Das Problem der jüdischen Wissenschaft," 185.

28. Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," 61.

29. *Ibid.*, 60.

30. *Ibid.*, 62–65.

31. *Ibid.*, 66.

32. *Ibid.*, 66–69.

33. *Ibid.*, 49.

34. Scholem, *Briefe*, 1:297, no. 126, May 8, 1945.

35. *Ibid.*, 1:302f., no. 129, August 6, 1945.

36. Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 122.

37. Interview by Jean Bollack and Pierre Bourdieu with Scholem, "l'identité juive," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (November 1980): 4. Avra-

ham Shapira notes that Scholem refused to publish this contribution in the collection of his works edited by Shapira and described it as *meyumam* (watered down). According to Shapira, the dilution was due chiefly to the influence of Scholem's wife, Fania. See Shapira, "The Symbolic Plane," 344.

38. Scholem, "The Science of Judaism—Then and Now," 306.

39. *Ibid.*, 308.

40. *Ibid.*, 310. In 1971, Walter Laqueur wrote in what is currently the standard history of Zionism that "the apologetic character of Jewish historiography has traditionally been one of its main weaknesses. Zionism has been instrumental in changing this." Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, xxviii.

41. Shapira, "The Symbolic Plane," 342, 350.

42. Agnon, *Shira*, 119

43. Alter, "The Achievement," 71.

44. Quotations in Baer, *Galut*, 9, 116, 118–19.

45. Baer, *Mehkarim u-masot be-toldot am yisrael*, 1:206.

46. Baer, *Galut*, 118–19.

47. Baer, *Mehkarim u-masot be-toldot am yisrael*, 1:16. See also his critical remarks regarding researchers on scholarship on Judaism in *ibid.*, 2:11: "On the one hand, they created an ideology, and on the other they collected dry facts."

48. "From the age of the Patriarchs down to our own time, the history of the Jewish people has been characterized by an inner organic unity and by its connection with the general organism of world history." *Ibid.*, 1:27. Similarly, he emphasizes "that in medieval Judaism there were not only common ideas but also ... a common historical will, which was expressed in religious literature." *Ibid.*, 2:12. On the centrality in the Zionist worldview of the concept of history as an organism, see Almog, *Zionism and History*, 17f.

49. See, for example, the remarks in his inaugural lecture "Ikarim be-hakirat toldot yisrael," in *ibid.*, 2:13.

50. *Ibid.*, 2:81, 12. On the context, see Raz-Krakotzkin, "Yitsuga," 166–70; Yuval, "Yitzhak Baer," 79.

51. In this connection, see also the discussion of Greek mystical and religious influences in his book *Yisrael be-amim*, 83–90.

52. For details, see Yuval, "Yitzhak Baer."

53. Baer, "Ha-yessodot"; Raz-Krakotzkin, "Yitsuga," 173. Scholem approached Gnosticism in much the same way. He too recognized the influence of Christian Gnostics on Jewish mysticism in the Middle Ages, but suspected that its roots lay in still-older Jewish origins of Gnosticism.

54. Yuval, "Yitzhak Baer," 81.

55. Baer, *Mehkarim u-masot be-toldot am yisrael*, 1:396.

56. Baron also wrote at this time a long study of the institution of the Jewish community. See his two-volume work *The Jewish Community*. For a critical discussion of Baer's, Dubnow's, and Baron's studies on the Jewish community, see Raz-Krakotzkin, "Yitsuga," 194–98.

57. Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 71–92. For a discussion including the Eastern European maskilim, see Feiner, "Sefarad dans les representations historiques de la Haskala."

58. Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, part 1, 2:xiii.

59. Baer, *A History*, 1:1, 3.

60. *Ibid.*, 1:100.

61. It is hardly surprising that the revival of the thesis that there was a golden age in medieval Spain originated not in Israel but rather in the United States. In a popular study published in 2002, a literary scholar from Yale, Maria Rosa Menocal, told “how Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in medieval Spain.” The latter is the subtitle of the book, which could have come out of the nineteenth-century literature of scholarship on Judaism. Like the latter, Menocal (who comes from Cuba) emphasizes the relevance of coexistence for her own time. See Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, especially 86f. She wants to remind us of this period of “convivencia” mainly because it can demonstrate a side of the coexistence of Muslims, Jews, and Christians that should be revived in the future, and that can at the same time serve as a model for a new, multicultural Europe. On the historical place of the golden age, see Ben-Sasson, “Al-Andalus,” which emphasizes that the achievements of the North African communities in no way lagged behind those of Jewish communities on the Iberian Peninsula. On the relevance of these debates for postmodern discourse, see Anidjar, *Our Place in Al-Andalus*; Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs*. On the political relevance of the assessment of Jewish history under Islamic rule in general, see the discussion between Cohen, “The Neo-Lachrymose Conception,” and Stillman, “Myth.”

62. See, for example, Baer, *Mehkarim u-masot be-toldot am yisrael*, 2:147–61.

63. See, for instance, the works of the French Orientalist René Grousset and the British Byzantinist Steven Runciman in the 1950s. For a summary, see Constable, “The Historiography.”

64. See especially his article “Gesirat tatnav,” in *Mehkarim u-masot be-toldot am yisrael*, 2:147–61.

65. Dinur and Baer studied in Berlin during the same years, and were trained by Täubler, but did not become acquainted with each other at that time. See Baer, “Le-zekher Benzion Dinur,” 217–21.

66. Rein, “Historion be-vinui uma,” 113. See, for example, Dinur, “Toldot ha-yishuv,” 79–86.

67. See Dünaburg (Dinur), “Ha-‘zemanim ha-hadashim’ be-toldot yisrael,” 63, especially 69–72. In this connection, the work of Dinur’s student Azriel Schohat is also important. In one study, Schohat sought to move the beginning of the Jewish Enlightenment in central Europe forward from the second half of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century, thus proceeding in conformity with Dinur’s periodization. See Schohat, *Im hilufey ha-tekufof*.

68. Benzion Dinur, *Dorot u-reshumot*, 3–16.

69. Dinur, *Israel and the Diaspora*, 47. Similarly, *ibid.*, 100.

70. *Ibid.*, 58, 62.

71. *Ibid.*, 94. In Israel this historical conception had a longer-lasting influence; remarkably, it was the teaching at the religious Bar-Ilan University, of all places, that followed for the longest time the model of the secular socialist Dinur, according to whom the modern period of Jewish history began in the year 1700. See Barnai, *Historiografia ve-le’umiut*, 50n160.

72. *Ibid.*, 145.

73. For details, see Conforti, “Historiografia ve-zikaron tsoni,” 206–86.



74. Barnai, *Historiografia ve-le'umiut*, 18–24.
75. Conforti, “Historiografia ve-zikaron tsoni,” 88–90.
76. Barnai, *Historiografia ve-le'umiut*, 27.
77. Raz-Krakotzkin, “Yitsuga,” 281–339. The same goes, moreover, for Samuel Krauss’s standard work *Vier Jahrtausende*, which appeared at that time in German and was never published in Hebrew translation.
78. Quoted in Barnai, *Historiografia ve-le'umiut*, 39.
79. Bartal, “Ha-musagim ‘am<sup>1</sup>-ve-‘arets” 49.
80. “Megamateynu,” *Zion* 1 (1936): 2. See also Baer’s article “Kavey yesod be-hitpathut ha-historit shel ha-yahadut bi-yemey ha-beynayim,” in *Mehkarim u-masot be-toldot am yisrael*, 2:30: “Despite the difference between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, and the difference between diverse countries and periods, in its way of life and in most of its characteristics the Jewish community remained united during the long span of time between the tenth and the eighteenth centuries.”
81. Schwartz, “Historiography,” 83f.
82. Alon, *The Jews*, 1:3f.
83. *Ibid.*, 1:11.
84. *Ibid.*, 1:50f., 87.
85. Yitzhak Fritz Baer, “Gedaliahu Alon,” in Alon, *Toldot ha-yehudim be-erets yisrael*, ix.
86. Quoted in Alon, *The Jews*, 2:xi.
87. Quoted in Oppenheimer, “Gedaliahu Alon,” 172.
88. Silberstein, “Towards a Postzionist Discourse,” 95–96.
89. Kaufmann, “Kurzgefaßte Inhaltsübersicht,” 128, 133.
90. Gelber, “Die Geschichtsschreibung,” 25f.
91. Barnai, *Historiografia ve-le'umiut*, 53.
92. Ben-Sasson, “Zekhuteynu,” 22.
93. In his characterization of Ben-Sasson, Ettinger discusses this difference. Ettinger, “Historion lohem,” 29.
94. Ben-Sasson, “Yahadut retsef,” 16.
95. Ben-Sasson, “Devarim al toda’ateynu ha-historit,” 11.
96. *Ibid.*, 5.
97. In 1975, not long after the Yom Kippur War, he wrote, “The Jew is in the world, and he created his country, [whose existence] was put in question with blood and fire. The Jew is in the world and it is his task to ask himself, no matter whether in a religious or a secular way, what the Shoah and the country [of Israel] mean. And he must ask himself, what this land means to him. The answer to these questions can come only from history.... Today, we must fight for the Golan Heights just as the Dutch, as a small nation, fought by their canals against the Spaniards.” Ben-Sasson, “Yahadut retsef,” 14.
98. Abramsky, “A National Jewish History,” 30.
99. In *Commentary*, Chaim Raphael criticized the view according to which “the pointing of all history [is] toward the emergence of the state of Israel.... In the final chapters the drama of Israel’s emergence as a state takes over, presented as a natural conclusion to the centrality given to the ancestral land in many earlier sections of the book.” Raphael, “The Texture,” 65.

100. Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Mavo," 19.

101. *Ibid.*, 21. See the discussion above of Baer, on whom Ben-Sasson explicitly bases his remarks.

102. Ben-Sasson's concept of the "organic" history of a people as analogous to the course of a person's life is also found in his "Yahadut retsef," 17.

103. Ben-Sasson, *A History*, 731.

104. Raphael, "The Texture," 69.

105. Hyman, "The Ideological Transformation of Modern Jewish Historiography," 148.

106. Ettinger, "Al historia ve-historionim," 48.

107. Quoted in Barnai, "Yehudey artsot ha-islam," 86. Whereas the first two names are seen as "typical" Israeli names, the next two are seen as connected with the Ashkenazi diaspora, and the last two with Jews from the Arab world.

108. Netanyahu, preface, ix. In his foreword, Netanyahu (the father of later prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu) emphasizes the homogeneous and continuous perspective on Jewish history. *Ibid.*, x. Netanyahu, who could not find an academic home in Israel, possibly because of his identification with the right-wing Revisionist movement, taught at Cornell University. His Zionist conception was also expressed in other works. Thus, at the end of his 1953 study on the statesman and philosopher Isaac Abravanel, who had been driven out of the Iberian Peninsula, Netanyahu asks how the further course of Jewish history might have looked if "a man of the stature of Abravanel had arisen and propagated a realistic course, a plan of regaining the Promised Land by settlement and colonization. One is inclined to believe that the plan, while it would have been criticized at the beginning, would have finally struck root and paved the way for future champions. Such advocacy might have changed the entire historic attitude of the Jews toward their national problem and kept their eyes fixed on earth, rather than upon heaven." Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel*, 255f.

109. Wassermann, "He'arot le'historiografia yehudit," 110. Still, in the 1990s in his *A People Apart*, a broad-based history of the Jews in Europe written for the *Cambridge History of Europe*, Tel Aviv historian David Vital wrote a purely political history of the Jews, in which social, gender, and cultural history are practically absent. The title of the book—*A People Apart*—is already programmatic in nature. From a central or western European perspective of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this way of collectively demarcating the Jews as a special people within Europe may seem strange. Nor is the strong concentration on persecution merely accidental. The book begins with Maria-Theresa's expulsion of the Jews from Prague and ends with the disaster constituted by the Evian Conference. Jewish history moves for two centuries between the two poles of a diaporic community increasingly exhausted by external threats and internal dissolution, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a return to the Jewish homeland and thus to a Zionist collective prepared to pursue an independent policy.

110. Myers, "Rebel in Frankfurt," 27.

111. See also Katz's critique of the efforts made by Dinur and other Zionist historians to find the pioneers of Zionism further back in history, and see individual projects for a Jewish state and emigration movements as the beginning of a Zionist movement. Katz, "The Forerunners of Zionism," 106.

112. Jacob Barnai, “Olamot she-lo nifgaschim. Ya’akov Katz ve-Shmuel Ettinger,” unpublished lecture. I am grateful to Barnai for making the unpublished manuscript of a lecture he gave on the relationship between the historians Katz and Ettinger accessible to me. Ettinger’s position on the question of the beginning of the Zionist movement and its religious forerunners is found in his “Yihuda.”

113. Katz, “Beyn historia le’umit u-le’umiut historit.” A similarly oriented critique of Baer was written by the later Tel Aviv philosophy professor Jacob (Eugen) Fleischmann (1921–90). In it, Fleischmann attacks the indefensible claim of Baer and other Zionist historians that they are writing an objective history, and that they judge it only from the inside. Like Katz in his critique of Ettinger, Fleischmann also relies on Baer’s attempt to construct an essence of Judaism, and occasionally rejects Baer’s point of view as “dogmatic.” See his critique of Baer’s *Yisrael ba-amim*, “Be’ayat ha-obyektivit ba-heker ha-historia ha-yisraelit,” especially 159.

114. Katz, “Umkehr oder Rueckkehr,” 92. Katz bases himself on Schwab’s *Heimkehr zum Judentum*. See also Myers, “Rebel in Frankfurt,” 24f.

115. Katz, *A House Divided*.

116. Interview in fall 1997, broadcast in the Open University’s series on Jewish studies, June 11, 1998, quoted in Silber, “A Hungarian Rhapsody,” 156.

117. Berger, “Jacob Katz,” 42.

118. Katz, “Historia ve-historionim,” 13.

119. Porat, “One Historian, Two Histories.”

120. A certain parallel for the Middle Ages is presented by *A Mediterranean Society*, the work of the historian Shlomo D. Goitein, who was born in Germany, but later worked in Jerusalem and Princeton. In six volumes, on the basis of a systematic investigation of the Cairo Geniza, Goitein presents a panorama of Jewish society in the Mediterranean area during the Middle Ages.

121. Already at the beginning of their respective academic careers the tensions between Ben-Sasson and Ettinger, on the one hand, and Katz, on the other hand, shaped their mutual relationship. As we have seen, in 1956 Katz had already sharply criticized Dinur’s work. A few years later, his student Ettinger published an extremely critical review of Katz’s *Tradition and Crisis*, as did Ben-Sasson. Both reviews appeared in respected academic journals (*Kiryat Sefer* and *Tarbits*), and divided the task between them: whereas Ettinger challenged mainly Katz’s conceptual definitions and sociological point of view, Ben-Sasson questioned the sources and interpretations. Ben-Sasson, “Musagim u-metsi’ut,”; Ettinger, “Masoret u-mashber.”

122. Kurzweil, *Be-ma’avak al erkhey ha-yahadut*, 184–240. This debate is summarized in an important article: Myers, “The Scholem-Kurzweil Debate.” See also Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, 94–97; Zadoff, “Ha-luhot ve-shivrey luhot muna-hin ba-aron.”

123. Kurzweil, “I ha-nahat she-be-historia u-ve-mada’ey ha-yahadut,” quoted in Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 284n61.

124. Scholem, *Briefe*, 2:51. In this letter of December 4, 1959, Scholem reacted to Kurzweil’s book *Sifrutenu ha-hadasha*, in which Kurzweil accused Scholem of hiding ideological goals behind his scholarly studies.

125. For instance, Raphael writes that “in almost all nations, twentieth-century historians have demystified such ‘myths’ and thus put themselves in sharp contradiction to public opinion or to political regimes.” Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme*, 61.

126. For an assessment, see especially Porat, *The Blue and the Yellow Stars of David*.

127. Segev, *Seventh Million*, 82.

128. See Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*; Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*; Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan*; Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*; Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origin of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. A little later, other works were published: Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*; Ram, *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology*; Sternhell, *Binyan uma*.

129. Morris, “The New Historiography,” 20. On the new historians, see, for example, Weitz, *Beyn hason le-revisia*; special issue of *History and Memory* that appeared in 1995 (vol. 7, no. 1) under the title *Israeli Historiography Revisited*. In French, see the special issue of *Annales: Histoire, Science sociales* 59, no. 1 (January–February 2004), with contributions by Shlomo Sand, Avi Shlaim, and Derek J. Penslar.

130. Morris, “The New Historiography,” 21.

131. *Ibid.*, 102.

132. Of course, in this conflict-laden situation, hostile reactions to the new historians and post-Zionism were not long in coming. What was claimed to be new was, the critics said, not really so revolutionary. The critics included historians and sociologists who were later to be influential—Israel Kolatt, Anita Shapira, Yonathan Shapira, and Moshe Lissak. The most detailed critique came from Efraim Karsh, an Israeli sociologist teaching in England who wrote a comprehensive study to refute the theses of the new historians regarding the 1948 war, which he calls “The New Israeli Distortography.” He begins with an unambiguous statement: “For quite some time Israeli historiography has been subjected to a sustained assault by a cohort of self-styled ‘new historians’ vying to debunk what they claim to be the distorted ‘Zionist narrative’ of Israeli history in general, and of the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular.” Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History*, 1, 6.

133. Different positions on this point are found in Ram, “The Colonization Perspective”; Shafir, “Zionism and Colonialism”; Penslar, “Zionism, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism,” 84–98; Gelber, “The Status of Zionist and Israeli History,” 140–42.

134. He used Zionist settlers as an example of “European overseas expansion in a frontier region, based on relatively homogeneous population and on separate markets.” See Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origin of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 10.

135. Quoted in Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates*, 109.

136. Raz-Krakotzkin, “Historisches Bewußtsein,” 202.

137. This can be critically evaluated, as does historian Penslar: “Although it claims impartiality, reliance on archival sources, and positivist self-presentation, this literature is, in fact, highly politicized. Until a decade ago, certain tenets of

classic Zionist ideology formed the very foundations of the scholarship on the Zionist movement and the Yishuv during its formative decades. Although some of the more recent scholarship has abandoned Zionist ideology, current writing is no less politicised—particularly the literature on the Yishuv and the early years of the State of Israel.” Penslar, “Narratives of Nation Building,” 104, 115. See also the opinion expressed by Gideon Shimoni, himself one of the most important historians of Zionism, in a critique of the new historians. Even a hundred years after the beginning of the Zionist movement, he writes, it is clear that its historiography “is no less shaped by ideological positions than it was at the beginning.” Shimoni, “Ba-tsila shel ideologia,” 164.

138. Silberstein, “Towards a Postzionist Discourse,” 97.

139. Evron, *Jewish State*. The Hebrew original appeared in 1988 under the title *Ha-heshbon ha-le’umi*. See also Sand, *Ha-historion*, 111–13, 197–205. More recently, an even more radical approach was chosen in the new book by Sand, *Matai*. It should be emphasized that most of the works mentioned here, with the exception of Evron’s and Sand’s, first appeared in English and outside Israel, and that none of their authors wrote them while a member of a history department at an Israeli university. Some of them are (like Segev) journalists, others work abroad (such as Shafir and Shlaim), and still others are active as sociologists in Israel (like Pappé) or operate outside academia (like Evron).

140. See his interview in *Ha-aretz*, January 9, 2004, his correction in *Ha-aretz*, January 23, 2004, and his review of the *Atlas of Palestine* under the title “Details and Lies” in the *New Republic*, October 31, 2005, 31–37.

## CHAPTER 6: POSTMODERN INFLUENCES

1. See chapter 10, titled “Die ‘linguistische Wende.’ Das Ende der Geschichte als Wissenschaft?” in Igers, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 87–96. Paradigm change is another concept that has generated the observation of the past since the 1960s. See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. On the application of the paradigm model to the humanities, see Rüsen, *Historische Vernunft*.

2. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 628.

3. Myers, “Selbstreflexion,” 57f.

4. Yerushalmi, “Jüdische Historiographie,” 79.

5. On this discourse, see Volkov, “Ha-yehudim be-hayey ha-amim.” Such a view is proposed most recently in Sand, *Matai*.

6. On male-dominated discourse, in addition to a series of monographs, see important essay collections that appeared in the 1990s: Davidmann and Tannenbaum, *Feminist Perspectives*; Rudavsky, *Gender and Judaism*; Harrowitz and Hyams, *Jews and Gender*; Peskowitz and Levitt, *Judaism since Gender*. Despite the growing number of studies in the area of the history of Jewish women, Heschel notes that “while the field of women’s studies has been highly self-conscious about its theoretical base, nothing comparable to feminist theory exists for Jewish Studies.” Heschel, “Nicht nur Opfer und Heldinnen,” 142. For a critical assessment of modern Jewish gender history, see also Hyman, “Die Theorie”;

Frevort, "Geschlechtergeschichte." On the Jewish body, see especially Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*; Gilman, *The Jew's Body*; Efron, *Defenders of the Race*; Eilberg-Schwartz, *People of the Body*.

7. Boyarin and Boyarin, *Jews and Other Differences*; Biale, Galchinsky, and Heschel, *Insider/Outsider*; Cheyette and Marcus, *Modernity, Culture, and the Jew*."

8. See, for instance, Boyarin, Itzkovitz, and Pellegrini, *Queer Theory*.

9. Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, xi–xii.

10. *Ibid.*, 173.

11. In a reply to a critic of his study, he stresses that his book is "not a work of history but a polemical essay based on a certain interpretation, to be sure, of an aspect of Jewish history. As such, it does not pretend to answer to canons of completeness or comprehensiveness that a history of modern Judaism or of Zionism would conventionally be required to." Boyarin, "Response to Allan Arkush," *Jewish Social Studies*, 4, no. 3 (1998): 93.

12. Roth, *Operation Shylock*, 32.

13. George Steiner, "Homeland/Exile," a lecture delivered at a meeting of the Spinoza Institute in Jerusalem, January 2005; Hobsbawm, "Benefits of Diaspora."

14. See Kauders, "What Power for Which Jews?"

15. Myers, "Selbstreflexion," 71.

16. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, xvii.

17. *Ibid.*, xxiv. In addition, he would like "to reclaim Bertha Pappenheim as a devout, feminist, radical Jew." *Ibid.*, 326.

18. *Ibid.*, 29.

19. *Ibid.*, 296, 302.

20. Graf, *Die Wiederkehr der Götter*, 240.

21. Myers, "Selbstreflexion," 70f.; Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction," 84f. On ultra-Orthodox interpretations of the Shoah, see Bauer, "Religiöse und säkulare Interpretationen der Schoa in Israel." On premodern forms of Jewish Orthodox historiography, see Karlinsky, *Historia she-ke-neged*.

22. As the historian Israel Bartal wrote, "The long-established and hence legitimate uses of history by the traditional Jewish society were not cast aside, but history now served to accentuate the crisis and offer a defense. And the Orthodox camp felt that it had no choice but to adopt both the methods and forms employed in the historical literature of the opposition.... The end product represents a new phenomenon, though the traditionalists themselves do not admit it." Bartal, "True Knowledge and Wisdom," 182.

23. This book differs from most of the products of Orthodox historiography in that it attempts to provide an overall interpretation of modern Jewish history, whereas others usually limit themselves to glorifying individual rabbis or illuminating specific episodes. Thus, Wein accepts the basic secular idea of a modern periodization of Jewish history. The Web site [rabbiwein.com](http://rabbiwein.com) offers useful insight into the marketing of this and similar products.

24. Wein, *Triumph of Survival*, xi.

25. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 13.

26. Wein, *Triumph of Survival*, xi.
27. *Ibid.*, 43.
28. *Ibid.*, 238.
29. Raz-Krakotzkin, "Geschichte, Nationalismus, Eingedenken," 200f.
30. Trigano, *La société juive*, 1:11.
31. This is the title of his introduction, *ibid.*, 1:13–34.
32. *Ibid.*, 1:14, 19f., 34.
33. Biale made this clear in an unpublished lecture. I thank him for letting me see the manuscript with the title "Collaborative Histories of the Jews and the Relationship between Jewish Studies in America and Israel."
34. Biale, "Preface," xxx, xxiv.
35. *Ibid.*, xxii.
36. Biale, "Collaborative Histories of the Jews."
37. Biale, "Preface," xxx.
38. Hendel, "Israel among the Nations," 46f.
39. Gruen, "Hellenistic Judaism," 94.
40. Biale, "A Journey between Two Worlds," 805.
41. Biale, *Cultures*, 42, 76, 222, 312, 976, 1098.
42. Gruen, "Hellenistic Judaism," 95.
43. Gafni, "Babylonian Rabbinic Culture," 253.
44. Ben-Sasson, *A History*, 308.
45. Gruen, "Hellenistic Judaism," 117.
46. Ben-Sasson, *A History*, 308.
47. Gruen, "Hellenistic Judaism," 122f.
48. Scheindlin, "Merchants and Intellectuals, Rabbis and Poets," 315–19.
49. Ben-Sasson, *A History*, 386.
50. *Ibid.*, 439.
51. Marcus, "A Judeo-Christian Symbiosis," 449.
52. Ben-Sasson, *A History*, 385.
53. *Ibid.*, 403.
54. Marcus, "A Judeo-Christian Symbiosis," 450, 461.
55. Rosman, "Innovative Tradition," 528.
56. Barnai, "Yehudey artsot ha-islam," 89. Ettinger later acknowledged the omission with regard to the Jews of North Africa and the Near East in his history, and edited a three-volume history of the Jews in Islamic lands, for which he wrote the introduction and let experts write the text. Ettinger, *Toldot ha-yehudim be-artsot ha-islam*. For a critique of his view of the Islamic world as Eurocentric and influenced by Western "Orientalism," see Piterberg, "Domestic Orientalism"; Raz-Krakotzkin, "Yitsuga," 118–23. See also Abitbol, "Toldot yehudey tsefon-afrika."
57. Marcus, "A Judeo-Christian Symbiosis," 470, 480.
58. Malkiel, "Part Two: Vision and Realization," 133.
59. Arkush, "Part Three: The Rest and the West," 150.
60. Roskies, "Border Crossings," 64f.
61. Biale, "Letter to the Editor," 16f.

## EPILOGUE

1. Benjamin aptly recognized this when he cited the well-known words of the French historian Fustel de Coulanges: “Si vous voulez revivre une époque, oubliez que vous savez ce qui s’est passé après elle” (“If you want to relive a period, forget that you know what happened after it”). See his observations in “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1/2:696.



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